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or **AWAKENED INDIA**

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

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September 2009
Devotional Literature:
Punjabi, Haridasa, Sufi

Vol. 114, No.9

THE ROAD TO WISDOM



SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON *Vedas—An Ancient Literature*

Genesis of Vedas

THE minds of the people from whom the Vedas came were intent upon following principles, discovering principles. They had no time to work upon details or to wait for them; they wanted to go deep into the heart of things. Something beyond was calling them, as it were, and they could not wait. Scattered through the Upanishads, we find that the details of subjects which we now call modern sciences are often very erroneous, but, at the same time, their principles are correct. For instance, the idea of ether, which is one of the latest theories of modern science, is to be found in our ancient literature in forms much more developed than is the modern scientific theory of ether today, but it was in principle. When they tried to demonstrate the workings of that principle, they made many mistakes. The theory of the all - pervading life principle, of which all life in this universe is but a differing manifestation was understood in Vedic times; it is found in the Brahmanas. There is a long hymn in the Samhitas in praise of Prana of which all life is but a manifestation.

Origin of Life: According to Vedas

By the by, it may interest some of you to know that there are theories in the Vedic philosophy about the origin of life on this earth very similar to those which have been advanced by some modern European scientists. You, of

course, all know that there is a theory that life came from other planets. It is a settled doctrine with some Vedic philosophers that life comes in this way from the moon.

Coming to the principles, we find these Vedic thinkers very courageous and wonderfully bold in propounding large and generalised theories. Their solution of the mystery of the universe, from the external world, was as satisfactory as it could be. The detailed workings of modern science do not bring the question one step nearer to solution, because the principles have failed. If the theory of ether failed in ancient times to give a solution of the mystery of the universe, working out the details of that ether theory would not bring us much nearer to the truth. If the theory of all - pervading life failed as a theory of this universe, it would not mean anything more if worked out in detail, for the details do not change the principle of the universe. What I mean is that in their inquiry into the principle, the Hindu thinkers were as bold, and in some cases, much bolder than the moderns. They made some of the grandest generalisations that have yet been reached, and some still remain as theories, which modern science has yet to get even as theories.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,
2.89.



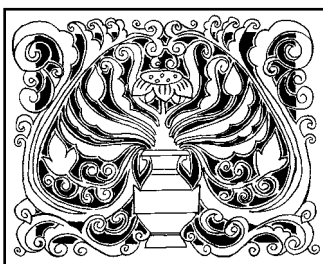
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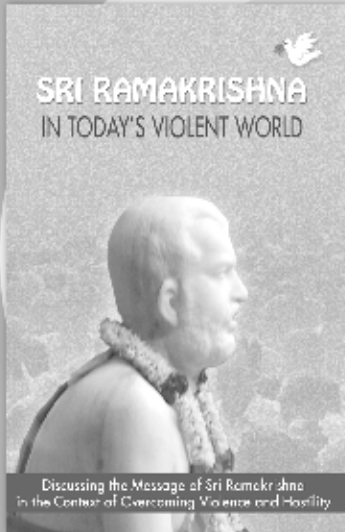
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Sri Ramakrishna In Today's Violent World



Pages viii + 208

An attempt to understand the role of Sri Ramakrishna in preventing and curing the humanity of the disease of violence.

Though we live in an age of violence, we all know that violence cannot be the way of life. While providing arms to self-defence groups, making stringent laws and holding peace meets has a limited effect, the real remedy lies in nurturing the Source of our being—which is full of peace, love and joy—and growing in tolerance and the timeless wisdom of sages. Sri Ramakrishna has a special role to play in this context. The present volume contains the articles that originally appeared in December 2004 issue of *The Vedanta Kesari*.

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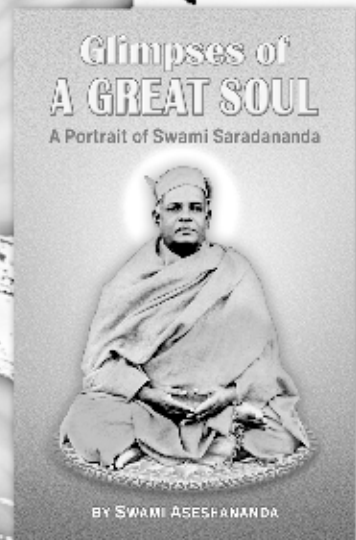
Glimpses of A Great Soul

Swami Saradananda, a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, was known for his profound devotion to Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, genuine concern for others, plain commonsense and an extraordinary serenity of mind.

The present volume is an intimate portrait of the personality of Swami Saradananda, providing rich details of his personal life and dealings. It brings into light his magnanimous heart, keen intellect and practical insights into life.

Swami Aseshananda, the author, was initiated by Holy Mother. He served as Swami Saradananda's private secretary for seven years. In 1955, he became the head of Vedanta Society of Portland, Oregon, USA, until his passing away in 1996.

Published by
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TRADITIONAL WISDOM

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत । *Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!*

The Devotee and the Divine

September 2009

Vol. 114, No. 9

थापिआ न जाइ कीता न होइ ॥ आपे आपि निरंजनु सोइ ॥
जिनि सेविआ तिनि पाइआ मानु ॥ नानक गावीऐ गुणी निधानु ॥
गावीऐ सुणीऐ मनि रखीऐ भाउ ॥ दुखु परहरि सुखु घरि लै जाइ ॥

He cannot be established, nor can He be created. The Pure One exists by Himself. They who served Him obtained honour. Says Nanak, sing the glories of the Treasure of Excellences. Sing, and hear, and cherish Him in your hearts. Thus shall you give up sorrow and take happiness home.
(‘Japuji Sahib’, Adi Granth, 2)

कह दुइ कर जोरी अस्तुति तोरी केहि बिधि करौं अनंता ।
माया गुन ग्यानातीत अमाना बेद पुरान भनंता ॥
करुना सुख सागर सब गुन आगर जेहि गावहिं श्रुति संता ।
सो मम हित लागी जन अनुरागी भयउ प्रगट श्रीकंता ॥

Joining both her palms [Mother Kausalya] said, ‘O Infinite One, how may I praise you? The Vedas and the Puranas declare you to be beyond maya, attributes, knowledge, and all measure. He whom the Vedas and holy personages hymn as the ocean of mercy and bliss and the repository of all virtue, the same lord of Lakshmi, who loves his votaries, has revealed himself for my weal.
(*Ramcharitmanas*, 1.192.2)

फरीदा गलीए चिकडु दूरी घरु नालि पिआरे नेहु ।
चला त भिजै कंबली रहां त तुटै नेहु ॥
भिजउ सिजउ कंबली अलह बरसउ मेहु।
जाइ मिला तिना सजणा तुटउ नाही नेहु॥

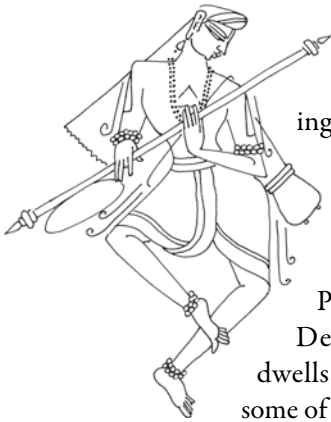
Farid says, the lane is muddy and the Beloved’s home is afar; but there is love too. If I walk along, the blanket [I wear] gets wet, and if I stay back, my [pledge of] love is broken. Let the blanket be wet, and let the clouds pour, I shall go and meet my Beloved, my love won’t be broken.
(Shaikh Farid)

It is just for this love of the devotees that God contracts himself into a human form and descends on earth to play his lila. (Sri Ramakrishna)

THIS MONTH

We continue our exploration of the **Indian Linguistic Heritage** with a look at some of the devotional literature of medieval India.

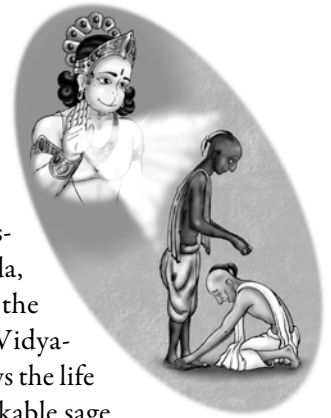
The Adi Granth provides a kaleidoscopic view of the rich devotional landscape of medieval India as well as the process of evolution of several modern Indian languages. Eminent littérateur A P N Panikaj opens this number with a look at the **Place of the Adi Granth in the Punjabi Literary Tradition**. The author lives in Chandigarh.



The Haridasa Literary Tradition of Karnataka has made spirituality living and accessible to common people, besides contributing richly to philosophical thought and musical culture. Dr H N Muralidhara, Professor of Kannada, V V N Degree College, Bangaluru, dwells on the lives and works of some of the Haridasas.

In **Sufism: Message of Love and Humanitarian Service** Dr Imtiaz Ahmad, Director, Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, takes us on a brief tour of a syncretic tradition that has played a significant role in shaping the Indian spiritual landscape.

Sant Tulsidas and his *Ramcharitmanas* stand indelibly etched on the Indian consciousness. Swami Durgananda, a monastic member of the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Coimbatore, surveys the life and works of this remarkable sage.

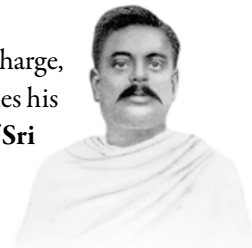


Fernando Pessoa, whose modernist writings 'gave Portuguese literature European significance', has left us some poems that sound uncannily Vedantic, argues Mr Alvaro C M de Vasconcellos of Grajau, Brazil, in **Vedantic Views of a Portuguese Poet**.

Swami Sarvagatananda, former Minister-in-Charge, Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, Boston, reminds us of the existential importance of nurturing solid values to go **Beyond Belief and Disbelief**.

In the tenth instalment of **Narada Bhakti Sutra** Swami Bhaskareswarananda, former President, Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur, discusses some of the characteristics of primary devotion.

Swami Chetanananda, Minister-in-Charge, Vedanta Society of St Louis, concludes his study of **Girish and the Devotees of Sri Ramakrishna**.



TO THE EDITOR

The third shloka of 'Traditional Wisdom' (July, p.403) mentions *śiva-sūtra-jālam*—'the network of Shiva-sutras (the basis of Sanskrit grammar)'. If *nava-panca-vāram* could be taken to mean 'nine times five', that is forty-five [instead of nine plus five, fourteen], then that could be taken to refer to the number of sutras in the text *Shiva Sutra* [recorded by Vasugupta] ending with *bhūyaḥ syāt-prati-milanam*. Why cannot *śiva-sūtra* in the shloka refer to this text?

—K Shivasubrahmanyam, Bangalore

Indian Linguistic Heritage

FINDING the common bases of Hinduism and awakening the national consciousness to them' was one of the important tasks that Swami Vivekananda envisioned for the movement he started in India. In his reply to the address of thanks and congratulations sent to him on the success of his work in America by the Hindus of Madras he painted a summary picture of the entire gamut of the Hindu religion:

Either one hears the Advaita-Keshari roaring in peals of thunder—the Asti, Bhati, and Priya—amidst the heart-stopping solemnities of the Himalayan forests, mixing with the solemn cadence of the river of heaven, or listens to the cooing of the Piya, Pitam in the beautiful bowers of the grove of Vrinda: whether one mingles with the sedate meditations of the monasteries of Varanasi or the ecstatic dances of the followers of the Prophet of Nadia; whether one sits at the feet of the teacher of the Vishishtadvaita system with its Vadakale, Tenkale, and all the other sub-divisions, or listens with reverence to the Acharyas of the Madhya school; whether one hears the martial 'Wa Guruki Fateh' of the secular Sikhs or the sermons on the Grantha Sahib of the Udasis and Nirmalas; whether he salutes the Sannyasin disciples of Kabir with 'Sat Sahib' and listens with joy to the Sakhis (Bhajans); whether he pores upon the wonderful lore of that reformer of Rajputana, Dadu, or the works of his royal disciple, Sundaradasa, down to the great Nishchaladasa, the celebrated author of *Vichara sagara*, which book has more influence in India than any that has been written in any language within the last three centuries; if even one asks the Bhangi Mehtar of Northern India to sit down and give an account of the teachings of his Lalguru—one will find that all these various teachers and schools have as their basis that system whose authority is the Shruti, Gita its divine commentary,

the *Shariraka-sutras* its organised system, and all the different sects in India, from the Paramahansa Parivrajakacharyas to the poor despised Mehtar disciples of Lalguru, are different manifestations.

If such is the bewildering diversity of Hindu beliefs, what would newcomers to the religion be expected to do? Would they be left alone to choose and practise their own form of religious belief? When this question was put to the swami a hundred and ten years ago by *Prabuddha Bharata*, he shot back: 'Can you ask that? They will choose for themselves. For unless a man chooses for himself, the very spirit of Hinduism is destroyed. The essence of our faith consists simply in this freedom of the Ishta.'

Freedom, to Swamiji, was the first condition of growth. He insisted that everyone must have freedom of thought as well as expression: 'Just as man must have liberty to think and speak, so he must have liberty in food, dress, and marriage, and in every other thing, so long as he does not injure others.' He noted that any curtailment of freedom necessarily lead to stagnation. He said to a London audience: 'We, in India, allowed liberty in spiritual matters, and we have a tremendous spiritual power in religious thought even today. You grant the same liberty in social matters, and so have a splendid social organisation. We have not given any freedom to the expansion of social matters, and ours is a cramped society.'

Freedom of religious thought and expression was at the root of the vigorous transformation that Hinduism underwent between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries, 'a transformation so great that it has been compared to that wrought in Western Christianity by Reformation.' J T F Jordens

notes: 'A new attitude to God, emotional, passionate bhakti, replaced the old approaches of sacrificial rite and monistic meditation, just as a new mysticism, practical yet ecstatic, replaced the former philosophical type. Forms of religious expression changed: love-songs to the Lord were sung, and group singing created a new popular cultural form, the *kirtan*. Pushing aside old gods, old attitudes, old cultural forms, the new movement also drove the sacred language, Sanskrit, back into the memories of the pandits and the deepest precincts of temples and monasteries. In the first centuries of their growth all modern Indian vernacular literatures were moulded by this religious movement, and thus were essentially mass literatures.'


The fresh linguistic vigour was well reflected in Tulsidas's works. According to Greaves, 'As clay is in the hands of a potter so was Hindi in the hands of Tulsidas. It yields to his touch and is moulded into the forms that his will dictates. Grammar and construction and the forms of the words are as subservient to him as are slaves to the command of their lords, He takes words and shortens and lengthens them. He twists and turns them. They do his bidding and assume the shape he commands, fitting in just where they are needed and yet without loss of dignity or self-respect.'

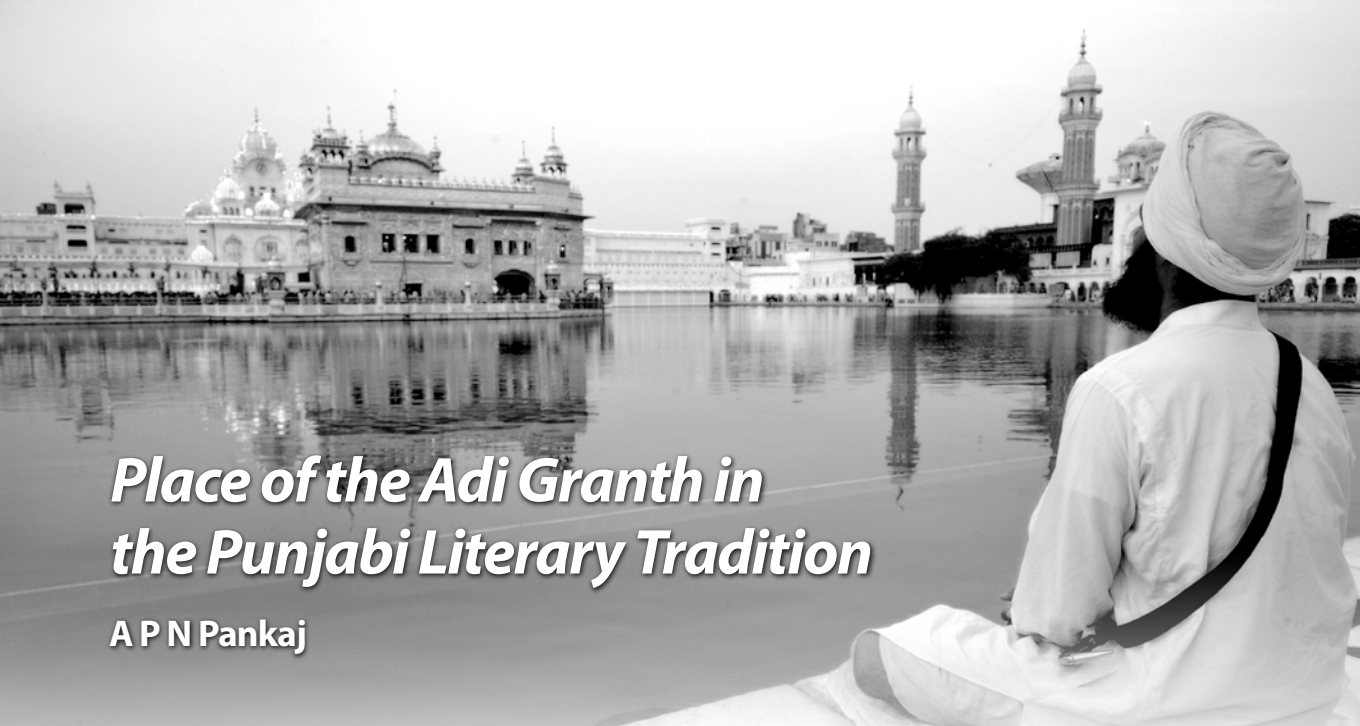
The sants, religious masters, of medieval India not only kept freeing religion from accretions and orthodoxy, they injected fresh life into its languages; in fact, they aided the birth of most of the numerous languages used here today. 'Simplicity is the secret,' Swami Vivekananda said. 'My ideal of language is my Master's language, most colloquial and yet most expressive. It must express the thought which is intended to be conveyed.'

'Language is the vehicle of ideas. It is the ideas that are of prime importance, language comes after. Just look at Sanskrit. Look at the Sanskrit of the Brahmanas, at Shabara Swami's commentary on the Mimamsa philosophy, the Mahabhashya of Patanjali, and, finally, at the great commentary of Acharya Shankara: and look also at the Sanskrit of comparatively recent times. You will at once under-

stand that so long as a man is alive, he talks a living language, but when he is dead, he speaks a dead language. The nearer death approaches, the more does the power of original thinking wane, the more is there the attempt to bury one or two rotten ideas under a heap of flowers and scents.'

Swami Vivekananda did not view Hinduism in exclusivist terms; 'in his eyes the piety of Hindus on the banks of the river Ganga, and the piety of the Mussalman kneeling in prayer at the appointed hours, were equally Indian and of equal worth'. He was also an enthusiastic supporter of the cross-fertilizations that help breed fresh and vigorous cultural forms. Urdu represents one such cross-cultural product indigenous to the Indian soil. Mohammad Hasan notes: 'Muslim saints, mostly Iranian by birth ... crossed over to India to spread a humanitarian mysticism, and as this involved free and frank dialogue with the masses, they had to develop a mixed vehicle of intercourse. As a matter of fact, all early specimens of Urdu go back to the writings and sayings of Muslim Sufi mystics. ... With the political stabilization of the Ghori and Slave dynasties, these strangers [the invaders of Turkish, Persian, and Afghan origin] left their homelands for ever and began to look on India as their own country. Thus a slow process of cultural and linguistic admixture started, heralding a new era of synthesis of Arab vigour and spirit of inquiry with Iranian graces of life, art, and luxury, and Indian love for subjective idealism and genius for achieving unity in diversity.'

Linguists have recognized five distinct speech families in India: Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Sino-Tibetan, and Austric, with Arabic added in medieval times. Languages belonging to these families have influenced each other profoundly and 'this has led to either a general evolution, or mutual imposition, in spite of original differences, of some common characteristics, which may be called specifically *Indian*'. There is also 'a fundamental unity in the literary types, genres, and expressions among all modern languages of India'. And spiritual culture played no small role in fostering this unity in diversity. This number shows us how. 



Place of the Adi Granth in the Punjabi Literary Tradition

A P N Pankaj

Countless are your Names, countless your abodes;
Completely beyond the grasp of the imagination
Are your myriad forms;
Even to call them myriad is foolish.

Yet through words and through letters
Is your Name uttered and your praise expressed;
In words we praise you,
In words we sing your virtues.

It is in words that we write and speak about you;
In words on man's forehead
Is written man's destiny.
But God who writes that destiny
Is free from the bondage of words.

As God ordains, so man receives;
All creation is his Word manifest.
Except in the light of his Word
There is no way.

How can an insignificant creature like myself
Express the vastness and wonder of your
creation?
I am too petty to have anything to offer you;
To abide by your will, O Lord, is man's best
offering;
You who are eternal, abiding in your peace.¹

IN THE BEGINNING, says the Bible, 'was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'² In the Hindu tradition, the Word is the

supreme Brahman, *śabda-brahman*, and the Vedas, the source of all knowledge, are also called *brahman*. The Sanskrit alphabet has been aphoristically arranged in the *māheśvara sūtras*, aphorisms of the Lord of lords. Significantly, the Sanskrit synonym for 'letter' is *akṣara*—the undecaying—and *akṣaras*, when joined together to convey meaning, thought, or sentiment become speech, *vāṇī*. Since Vedic times sages have propitiated this *akṣara*, and a Vedic mantra declares that no Vedic hymns are of any consequence to one who does not know *akṣara*, while those who know it are perfect:

*Ṛco akṣare paramē vyoman-
yasmin-devā adhi viśve niṣeduh;
Yas-tan-na veda kim-rcā kariṣyati
ya it-tad-vidus-ta ime samāsate.*³

The great Sanskrit poet Kalidasa speaks of Parvati and Parameshvara, the progenitors of the universe, as being inseparable from each other, like speech and its meaning, even as he salutes them in search of the knowledge of speech and its meaning:

*Vāgarthāvivā saṁpṛktau vāgartha-pratipattaye;
Jagataḥ pitarau vande pārvatī-paramēśvarau.*⁴

The 'Word' is also the *akhar*, the *bānī*, the *sabad*

of the Adi Granth. Guru Nanak (1469–1539), while acknowledging the great inadequacy of words—of all words, no matter of what language—in describing the unfathomable Supreme Being, still resorts to them because it is ‘through words and through letters that your Name is uttered and your praise expressed’. Admitting that ‘God, the writer of destiny, is free from the bondage of words’, he goes on to point out that God is eulogized through them and ‘in words on man’s forehead is written man’s destiny’.

Despite giving much importance to speech, the great guru denounces scholastic wrangling, emphasizing instead the contemplative life and freedom from egotism:

One may read cartload of books
With caravan-loads of books to follow;
One may study shiploads of volumes
And heap them pile on pile in one’s cellars;
One may read for years upon years
And spend every month of the year in reading
alone;
And thus read all one’s life
Right up to one’s last breath,
Of all things, contemplative life
Is what matters;
All else is the fret and fever of egoistic minds.⁵

So what is the worth of the word and all the learning that goes with it? The Adi Granth opens with the *akṣara*, the syllable which incorporates all languages and all divine entities. That *akṣara*, or *akhar* in Punjabi, is *ek onkār*, the one and only Om. The Bhagavadgita calls it *ekākṣara brahma*, Brahman as the single syllable.⁶ The *Chhandogya Upanishad* prescribes that ‘one should meditate on the letter “Om”, which is the name of the supreme Reality.’⁷ The opening invocation, *ek onkār*, in the Adi Granth, is followed by a deeply meaningful poem:

*Sati nāmu kartā purkhu nirbhau nirvairu;
Akāl mūrati ajūnī saibhān gur prasādi.*⁸

There is one God
Eternal Truth is his name;
Maker of all things

Fearing nothing and at enmity with nothing,
Timeless is his image
Not begotten, being of his own Being:
By the grace of the guru, made known to men.⁹

The Words of Gurus and Bhagats

Elsewhere in the Adi Granth, Guru Nanak says that if the guru’s word is not heeded and life is wasted on the temptations of this world, ‘your soul will suffer as body scalded by oil’ (90). When, however, the word comes from the *sat-gurū*, it no longer remains a vehicle of ordinary communication, it becomes *sabad*—*śabda*, *śabda-brahman*, or *mantra*—the Supreme Being embodied in the Word. Guru Nanak uses the words *gurū* and *sat-gurū* for God himself, the ultimate Master. According to the Sikh tradition, God is *nirākār*, formless; yet he is represented by the guru and his Word, for it is through the Word that he communicates the idea of the unknown, unknowable, and indefinable Brahman to the Sikh *śiṣya*, disciple. Indian tradition has reposed, since earliest times, the highest faith and reverence in the spiritual preceptor and his words. Time and again we are reminded of the importance of the *śiṣya* respectfully approaching the guru for the knowledge of the Supreme. It is also stipulated that the preceptor himself ought to be *śrotriya*, proficient in Vedic learning, *brahmaniṣṭha*, established in Brahman, *tattvadarśin*, a knower of Truth, and *akāmahata*, not stricken by passion.¹⁰ Sri Ramakrishna says, ‘The Guru is a mediator. He brings man and God together, even as a matchmaker brings together the lover and the beloved.’¹¹

Of such words—*sabads*, *salokas*, *pads*, *chhants*, *paudī*, and other similar poetic forms—of seven gurus and twenty-nine saints, called *bhagats*, is the Adi Granth a compilation. The name ‘Guru Granth Sahib’ was given to it by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last guru, who gave it a definitive form—including therein the *bānī* of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth guru, as well as his own—rechristened it, and installed it on the Guru Gaddi, the seat of the guru, as the Eternal Guru, in 1707. Before that, the fifth guru, Arjan Dev, had compiled the *bānī*

of the first five gurus—Nanak, Angad, Amardas, Ramdas, and Arjan Dev himself—and of twenty-nine *bhagats*. Fifteen of these *bhagats* were from the pre-Nanak era: Kabir, Shaikh Farid, Namdev, Ravidas, Ramanand, Parmanand, Sadhana, Pipa, Sain or Sena, Bhikhan, Jaydev, Beni, Dhanna, and Trilochan. The contemporary *bhagats* and *bhāṭs*, minstrels, whose works find place in the *Adi Granth* include Satta, Balwand, Sundar, Surdas, Kalshar, Jalap, Bhikha, Salh, Balh, Nalh, Gyand, Bal, Mathura, Kirat, and Harbans. These saints belonged to different social strata, held different religious or sectarian beliefs, lived in different provinces of the country, and spoke different languages. Thus, their *bānī* lends the *Guru Granth Sahib* a pan-Indian character.

To understand and appreciate the spirit of the Punjabi literary tradition it has to be kept in mind that, as declared by Guru Gobind Singh, the *Adi Granth* is the final guru, that it is a divine work, and that Sikhs are to receive all their temporal as well as transcendental instructions from it. While it is true that, like the literature of other languages, Punjabi too has its secular works, yet it is from the *Adi Granth* that Punjabi literature receives a large bulk of its vocabulary, idiom, diction, and inspiration. In chronological terms, the *Adi Granth* spans a period of nearly five centuries, beginning with Shaikh Farid (1173–1265), who is considered the first Punjabi poet—the Chaucer of Punjabi poetry—and reaching up to the early years of the eighteenth century.

The ‘Japuji Sahib’¹², a *bānī* of Guru Nanak, beginning with *ādi sac*, is the chief morning prayer of the Sikhs. Next in importance is another long hymn, ‘Sukhmani’ (262–96), composed by Guru Arjan Dev. The fifth guru contributed the highest number of hymns to the *Adi Granth*—2,218 in all—comprising nearly one third of the text. Hew McLeod calls Sukhmani the ‘epitome of the teachings of the Sikh Gurus’. Here is the opening verse:

Ever and ever, remembering, remember your
Lord;

In whose remembrance you shall attain bliss;
And erase from your heart all sin and sorrow!
Remember the praises of the One who sustains
all things,
Whose Name innumerable millions chant in
praise!
The essence of the Vedas, Puranas, and Smritis,
Is to contemplate the One, the Holy Name.
He who but treasures the Lord in his heart for a
moment,
Who can recount his enrichment or his
exaltation?
With those, O Lord, who aspire but to a single
glimpse of yours,
Save me, cries Nanak, O Lord, with them save me!
In this Song of Peace is the holy Name.
Which, like ambrosia, bestows bliss when tasted;
It indwells in the hearts of the Lord’s saints.¹³

Nām simaran, remembrance of the Name, is accorded the highest priority in the *Adi Granth*; this theme reverberates through its entirety. McLeod says, ‘The essence of the *nām* is harmony and through this discipline the faithful devotee progressively unites himself with the divine harmony.’¹⁴ It has been pointed out that ‘all the Sant poets stress the necessity of devotion to and practice of the divine Name (*nāma*), devotion to the Divine Guru (*sat-guru*) [*sic*] and the great importance of the company of the Saints (*satsaṅg*). The Name, the Divine Guru and the *satsaṅg* are the three pillars of the Sant *sādhana*.’¹⁵ The tenets of the *Guru Granth Sahib* are in consonance with this statement.

Rahirās, recited at sunset, has nine hymns. The first of its prayers begins with the words *so daru* and has five hymns, and the second, beginning with *so purakhu*, four. These two prayers are accordingly called ‘So Daru’ and ‘So Purakhu.’¹⁶ The first three hymns of ‘So Daru’ were composed by Guru Nanak, the fourth by Guru Ramdas, and the fifth by Guru Arjan. The first two hymns of ‘So Purakhu’ are Guru Ramdas’s creation, the third Guru Nanak’s, and the fourth Guru Arjan’s. Then there is the ‘Sohila’, having five hymns (12–13). These are recited at bedtime or at the time of cremation.

‘Anand Sahib’ (917–22), one of Guru Amardas’s

compositions, is a poem of joyous celebration, as the name suggests. The first four *chhants*—prefixed with the words *hari pahilarī*, *hari dūjarī*, *hari tijarī*, and *hari choutharī*, and concluded with *lāv pahilī*, *lāv dūjī*, and so on—are recited to solemnize the Sikh marriage. The young bride and bridegroom take their vows of marriage going round the Guru Granth Sahib four times—*lāv*, incidentally, means circumambulation—while these hymns are recited in a chorus led by the Sikh priest.

The Veda Vyasa of Sikh Tenets

Guru Arjan is the proverbial Veda Vyasa of the Sikh tenets. To him goes the credit of giving the Adi Granth the form of a *samhitā*, compendium—a Herculean task indeed. He took great pains to source the people from whom and the places from where the *bānī* could be accessed; he deputed his emissaries, and even went himself to collect these works. ‘During the time of the third Guru Amar Dās (died 1574), a collection was made of the hymns of the first three Gurūs and of other writers (Sants and Sūfis) whose works accorded with the teachings of Nānak.’¹⁷ It is said that Guru Nanak, during one of his *udāsīs*, pilgrimages, had himself collected the *bānī* of Shaikh Farid and handed it down to the second guru. Incidentally, among the *bhagats* whose *bānī* has been incorporated in the Adi Granth, after Kabir, Farid has the highest number of hymns and *salokas* attributed to him—four and a hundred and twelve respectively. Interestingly, his *salokas* are interspersed with eighteen *salokas* of the gurus. Here is a specimen of the interaction of *salokas*.

Says Farid:

*Faridā kālīn jini na rāviā dhaulī rāvai koi;
Kari sānī siu pirharhī raṅg navelā hoi.*

When your hair was black (when you were in the prime of youth), you did not love God. Now that the hair has gone white, what are you going to accomplish? Even now, if you truly love the Lord, you will regain the colour (attain to bliss).

Says Guru Amardas:

*Faridā kālī dhaulī sāhibu sadā hai je ko citi kare;
Āpaṇā lāiā piramu na lagai je locai labhu koi;
Ehu piramu piālā khasam kā jai bhāvai tai dei.*

O Farid! If one truly loves the Lord, it does not matter whether the hair is black or white (whether one is young or old). But in spite of craving, everyone does not attain to His love. The chalice of love is the property of the Master. He gives it to whomsoever He wills.¹⁸

The aforementioned collection was in the possession of Baba Mohandas, son of the third guru, who was not willing to part with it. According to Gopal Singh, the fifth guru had to struggle hard to appease Baba Mohandas and collect these works from him. He first deputed Bhai Gurdas and then Baba Buddha to fetch them. They having failed in this effort, he went himself and, after considerable cajoling, succeeded in his mission. He sent an open invitation to the successors and followers of the different streams of saints and *bhagats* across the country, requesting them to send him the compositions of their respective spiritual predecessors. He tried his best to collect the representative literature of the saints of India, of diverse religious sects and linguistic traditions, who, at the same time, were in agreement with the Sikh doctrines.¹⁹ In response, many of his contemporaries came personally and recited the works of their masters in his presence.

Having received this large body of literature he had now to perform the task of finally selecting and, unenviably, rejecting some of these works. It is said, for example, that on being informed about a portion of Guru Nanak’s works being preserved in Sinhala-dvipa, Sri Lanka, he deputed one of his disciples to collect it. Given the scarce means of transport and communication, and the hazards of a journey over hundreds of miles, it was a challenging task indeed. But when this work, known as ‘Pran Sangali’, was procured and presented to the guru, he found it to be of doubtful authenticity and, therefore, did not include it in the body of the Adi Granth. It is now a part of what is called *Kachī Bānī*, unconfirmed works. Gopal Singh says that the *bānī* not in consonance with the *gurnat*, guru’s doctrine,

were rejected, even when, from the point of view of language and diction, they appeared to have been composed by the gurus.

If the task of collecting and selecting the compositions was stupendous, their arrangement into a particular sequence and order—with appropriate titles—was no less so. The question as to who would be the right person to take up the challenging task of writing down the entire compendium was also of great importance. Language was a major consideration. Over the centuries that the works of the gurus and the saints were handed down through oral tradition, they had undergone significant evolutionary changes, not only in their own regions but also during their trans-regional journeys and cross-cultural encounters. In many cases, even the number of lines in the *pads* varied in different recensions. A typical example is that of Kabir, the most important of the *bhagats* of the *Adi Granth* and one who is considered to have influenced Guru Nanak's thinking in a big way. In an erudite study of Kabir's *pads*, Winand M Callewaert lists no less than eleven different manuscripts. Two of these are older than the *Adi Granth* and eight belong to subsequent dates. Not only are there differences in the number of *pads*, even the shared *pads* have different versions. Then there are different editions of some of these manuscripts as well.²⁰ One could make similar statements about the works of the other *bhagats* too, albeit in lesser measure. While the compiler's concern must have been to remain close to the enunciations and understanding of the essential constituency of the gurus, he would certainly have also considered it necessary that, in terms of content and flavour, the compositions retained, as far as possible, their original character. It may be relevant to note here that while all the gurus represented the urban Khatri class, most of their followers were rural Jats. It was probably with this in mind that Guru Arjan had to adapt the *bānī* of the *bhagats* to the dialect of the Jat constituency.

For the task of writing the text, the guru's eyes fell on Bhai Gurdas (d.1637), a great devotee of the gurus, who had received his education under Guru Amardas and initiation from Guru Ramdas. He was

also a great poet and a preacher of the *gurmāt* and had spent several years as a missionary in Punjab, Kabul, and Kashi. For four years he remained busy writing the *Adi Granth* and helping in the construction of the Hari Mandir Sahib and the Akal Takht in Amritsar. Guru Arjan had asked him to incorporate his own *vārs*²¹ in the *Adi Granth*, but Bhai Gurdas politely declined, saying that he was too small to receive honour by the side of the gurus.²²

It was Guru Angad who, arguably, created *Gurmukhi*, 'from or of the guru's mouth', a script for accurately recording the sacred Sikh literature. Guru Ramdas founded the holy city of Amritsar. The place was originally established by him as a new village and was known as *Guru-ka-chak*; later it came to be called *Ramdaspur*, and eventually *Amritsar*. At Amritsar, the Guru had a tent pitched beside the *sarovar*, lake, that was being dug, and there seated Bhai Gurdas to write the *bānī*. It took Bhai Gurdas nearly one and a half years to complete the writing of the *Adi Granth*.

As already indicated, most of the compositions identified for incorporation in the *Adi Granth* had been received from oral tradition. It was considered appropriate to classify them according to their raga, musical pattern, and not thematically or chronologically, because the singers arranged them in terms of ragas. Callewaert has given a list of thirty-one ragas which the compositions of the *Guru Granth Sahib* have been classified into.²³ He also says:

First the singer sang a particular hymn in a particular *rāga* and ... hymns which were to be sung in the same *rāga* were grouped together in clusters. That was an obvious method of classification for a singer, with the result that a *rāga* is like an identity-card for the earliest period of oral transmission.

The same hymn could be sung to different *rāgas* and we find hymns classified under different *rāgas* in different regions and manuscripts. This variation in classification is obviously not due to a scribe's intervention, but stems from the oral period itself, when the songs were in the hands of the singers. When Gurū Arjan compiled the hymns of the Gurūs and *bhagats* in 1604, he also

standardized the use of the *rāga* for each hymn. If for Nāmdēv, Kabīr and Ravidās, we compare the *rāga* structure in the Ādi Granth with that in the Rajasthani repertoires, we find considerable differences. The Panjabi singers handled a text which was not only morphologically but also musically very different from what their colleagues in Rajasthan had (2.16).

It may be mentioned that from the point of view of numerical importance the ragas Asa, Siri, Bilavalu, Sarang, and Maru constitute the major share of the compositions, numbering 365, 200, 190, 177, and 160 respectively. The ragas of the Ādi Granth also bear a pan-Indian imprint inasmuch as they represent different parts of the country and their folk styles, as well as seasonal characteristics.

In the Guru Granth Sahib, under the caption of each raga, the *bānī* of the seven gurus has been arranged in order of their succession. All hymns composed by the gurus bear Guru Nanak's name. The specific author can be identified by the succession order indicated by the term *mahālā*. Thus, Guru Nanak is identified by 'mahālā 1', Guru Angad by 'mahālā 2', and so on. Besides the seven Gurus whose *bānī* is included in the Guru Granth Sahib, it was only Guru Nanak's beloved minstrel Mardana who had the honour of using the name 'Nanak' in his compositions, three in number. The *bānī* of the *bhagats* follows the gurus' *bānī* under each raga; but they are ordered neither chronologically nor in accordance to their process of evolution. There are also some compositions that have been placed outside the purview of the raga order. They appear in the beginning and towards the end of the compilation. 'Japuji', for example, has been given at the outset after the *mūla mantra* and does not bear any raga caption. It is followed by 'So Daru' in the Asa and Gujari ragas and thereafter by 'So Purakhu' in the Asa. The Guru Granth Sahib has 1,430 pages—the number being considered sacrosanct and adhered to in all editions. The last seventy-eight pages (1353–1430) include a miscellany of texts in various poetic forms—*salokas*, *gāthās*, *phunahes*, *chauboles*,

savaiyās, *vārs*, and *mundāvanīs*—as well as the *rāga mālā*, an enumeration of the ragas of the Guru Granth Sahib. These do not follow the order of the raga sections.

(To be concluded)

Notes and References

1. See *Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, trans. Dr Trilochan Singh et al. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960), 38–9.
2. John, 1.1.
3. Rig Veda, 1.164.39.
4. Kalidasa, *Raghuvamsha*, 1.1.
5. See *Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, 91–2.
6. Bhagavadgita, 8.13.
7. *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 1.1.1.
8. Sri Guru Granth Sahib, 1.
9. *Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, 28.
10. See, for instance, *Mundaka Upanishad*, 1.2.12; Gita, 4.34; *Vivekachudamani*, 32–6.
11. *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Chennai: Ramakrishna Math, 2006), 185.
12. Guru Granth Sahib, 1–8.
13. See *Selections from the Sacred Writings of the Sikhs*, 155.
14. Hew McLeod, 'Sikhism', in *A Cultural History of India*, ed. A L Basham (New Delhi: Oxford, 1998), 298.
15. Charlotte Vaudeville, 'Sant Mat', in *The Sants: Studies in a Devotional Tradition of India*, ed. Karine Schomer and W H McLeod (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1987), 31.
16. Guru Granth Sahib, 8–11.
17. 'Sikhism', 298.
18. Guru Granth Sahib, 1378. For an introduction to the life and poetry of Shaikh Farid in Hindi, see Pran Nath Pankaj, *Bolai Shaikh Farid* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2002).
19. See Gopal Singh, 'Ādi Granth te Us da Parbhav Punjabi Boli utte', in *Punjabi Sahit da Itihas*, ed. Surinder Singh Kohli (Chandigarh: Punjab University, 1973), 1.285–7. Summary of contents and translations of the Punjabi quotations are mine.
20. Winand M Callewaert et al., *The Millenium Kabir Vānī* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2000), x.
21. *Vār* is a form of heroic poetry in Punjabi. Guru Nanak extended its range to express quietist sentiment, *śānta rasa*, through it.
22. See Tarlochan Singh, 'Bhai Gurdas', in *Punjabi Sahit da Itihas*, 339.
23. Winand M Callewaert, *Śrī Guru [sic] Granth Sāhib* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996), 2.17–18.

The Haridasa Literary Tradition of Karnataka

Dr H N Muralidhara

THREE main religious traditions—the Jain, the Virashaiva, and the Vaishnava—are known to have had a significant impact on Kannada literature, which has a documented history spanning over a thousand years. In its early period, the Jain poets, most of whom were supported by kings as ‘royal poets’, created the ‘classical’ tradition. The Virashaiva literature, which flourished in the 12th century, is considered to have been revolutionary for more than one reason. *Vacanas*, the typical Virashaiva literary expressions, are a kind of poetic prose that have provided a unique dimension to the Kannada literary tradition. Their authors, the *vacanakaras*, were primarily mystics who led a socio-religious movement that threw open the doors of devotion and spirituality to all, irrespective of caste and creed. The next stage was that of the Haridasa literature, popularly called the Dasa literature, shaped by the followers of the Vaishnava tradition; and it is this tradition that forms the context of our study.

Origin and Development

The Dvaita or dualistic school of Vedanta, championed by Sri Madhvacharya, also known as Ananda-tirtha (1238–1317), is the main source of inspiration for the Haridasa literature. The monastic tradition established by Madhvacharya continued the practice and propagation of this philosophy. Many monks and scholars of this tradition wrote Sanskrit commentaries on Madhva’s works. Some of these very monks were also responsible for the origin and evolution of another form of expression meant to spread the message of the Madhva philosophy in the language of the common people. Sri Narahari-

tirtha (d.1333), a direct disciple of Madhvacharya, is said to have been the promoter of this kind of literature in Kannada. But only one or two compositions of Narahari-tirtha are available today. We may firmly state, however, that it was Sripada-raya, or Lakshminarayana Muni (1406–1504), who laid the foundation for the Haridasa tradition. In spite of opposition from Sanskrit scholars, he composed songs in Kannada, set them to music, and made arrangements for a team of devotional singers to sing them at the time of worship in the math. Though the compositions of Sripada-raya are not many in number, we find in them the representative features of Dasa devotional expression. Here is a well-known composition by Sripada-raya wherein he initiates a debate: Who is great, the Lord or the devotee?

O Sri Hari! Is it you that are great, or your devotees? If examined in different ways [one finds that] you have become subordinate to your devotees. While the Vedas are ever praising you as the Supreme Lord and the Highest Soul, you, dwelling in the mansion of Dharma and Arjuna, did follow them gladly whenever you were called. Then, who is great? You are considered as the Lord of the whole universe; therefore, you are very great. If you are pleased, you do grant even *Moksha*. But when you are found watching the doors of King Bali, then, who is great?¹

It was Vyasa-raya, or Vyasa-tirtha (1447–1539), a disciple of Sripada-raya, who gave a definite shape to the Haridasa movement. He commanded great respect from the rulers of the Vijayanagara Empire, especially from Krishnadeva-raya. Though he was the author of several Sanskrit works pertaining to the

Madhva philosophy, he was very much attracted by the beauty of Kannada compositions. Not only did he compose songs, he also encouraged others to do so. Tradition has it that during his period two distinct divisions took shape among the followers of the Madhva cult. One was the *Vyasa-kuta* and the other the *Dasa-kuta*. While the former gave preference to the study of Sanskrit works, scholastic achievements, and philosophical debates, the latter mainly adhered to devotion and renunciation, along with composing the devotional *devaranamas* in Kannada. Though both the divisions shared a common philosophical background, there were differences at the practical level.² Nonetheless, the Haridasa movement took a definite form, both from the literary and conceptual standpoints, at this particular stage.

Conceptual Background: Bimbopasana

Madhvacharya divides all existence into two basic entities: the independent and the dependent.³ According to him only Bhagavan Narayana exists independently. All the rest, from Goddess Lakshmi to all individual human souls, depend completely on Narayana for their existence. Ignorance causes these dependent entities to assume themselves independent—and this is bondage. Two types of veil cover the real nature of souls. One is *ishvaracchadika*, that which covers the real nature of God, and the other is *jivacchadika*, that which covers the real nature of the soul. The way to come out of this bondage is to become the *dasa*, slave, of the Lord. According to the Haridasas, it is by completely surrendering oneself at the feet of the Lord and eliminating the false ego that one can obtain deliverance from ignorance and bondage.

One distinctive feature of the Haridasas is that, more than anything else, they adhered firmly to the concept of *bimbopasana* expounded by Madhvacharya. According to this, when the all-pervading Vishnu resides in the hearts of individuals as the indwelling spirit, he is called 'Hari'. Hari is the *bimba*, the entity reflected. The individual soul is the *prati-bimba*, the reflection of the *bimba*. The *pratibimba*

is always subordinate to the *bimba* and is controlled by it. The ignorant soul, by constantly contemplating on the concept of *bimba*, attains freedom. It is to be noted here that even the term 'Haridasa' has its origin in this concept.⁴ The exposition of this concept of *bimbopasana* forms one of the Haridasa literature's main themes. For example, Gopala-dasa says:

O man! Meditate upon the *Bimba* [indwelling God] within yourself by sitting in a joyous mood. After having bowed down to the twelve preceptors, after becoming perfectly righteous, after having repeated the first *Mantra* from the beginning, and after having understood the indweller with pure devotion, meditate upon Him with great confidence, sitting in the *Padmasana* posture—with legs folded across.

Without moving the body and with great firmness [of mind], having shut the eyes, having forsaken sensuality, and having fixed the most auspicious and perfect image in the mind, see everything.

Having once remembered all the forms of God and the image of the Highest Preceptor, take back the mind and fix it again in the *Bimba* of your own Preceptor. Afterwards, gently think of all these images with concentration, and having brought them together, join the same with the image of God, who resides permanently in your heart.

In the light of knowledge, having prepared your heart, the lotus of eight petals, and having seated *Srinivasa*, whatever worship you do outside, do it inside.

Do service (*upasana*) with four qualities. Look at the form of Hari every moment, saying that He is the ordainer of every item of life, and that there is no one except the Lord.

Having discarded affection, without desiring anything, having understood all the other objects as equal, and having observed *samadhi* with devotion and foresight (*divyadrishti*) observe the mode gradually.

If meditated in this way, God shall show mercy; and the store of passions being destroyed, you will attain *aparokshajnana*. Then Gopala Vitthala will bless you.⁵

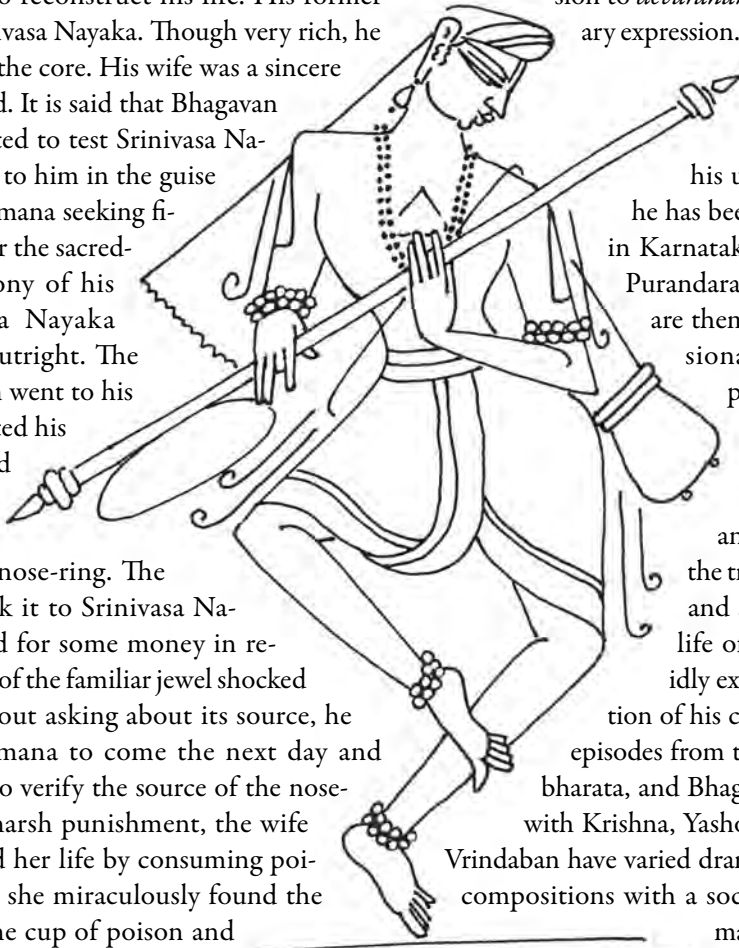
Purandara-dasa

Even after Sripada-*raya* and Vyasa-*raya* there were monks who composed songs in Kannada. But the majority of the Haridasas were householders. They were in the world, yet not of the world. Though some were engaged in worldly activities early in their career, unexpected turns transformed their lives and they took the path of the *dasas*. Self-surrender became their life-breath.

The name of Purandara-dasa (1480–1564) stands at the top of the Haridasa tradition. He brought about significant changes in the fields of literature and music and became a source of inspiration for future composers. He is even regarded as the ‘father of the Carnatic or South Indian form of music’. Since no authentic material on his early life is available, it becomes inevitable that we depend upon legend to reconstruct his life. His former name was Srinivasa Nayaka. Though very rich, he was a miser to the core. His wife was a sincere devotee of God. It is said that Bhagavan Narayana wanted to test Srinivasa Nayaka and came to him in the guise of a poor brahmana seeking financial help for the sacred-thread ceremony of his son. Srinivasa Nayaka refused him outright. The brahmana then went to his wife and narrated his plight. Filled with compassion, his wife gave away her nose-ring. The brahmana took it to Srinivasa Nayaka and asked for some money in return. The sight of the familiar jewel shocked Nayaka. Without asking about its source, he told the brahmana to come the next day and rushed home to verify the source of the nose-ring. Fearing harsh punishment, the wife decided to end her life by consuming poison. However, she miraculously found the nose-ring in the cup of poison and

handed it to her husband. Through further enquiry Nayaka came to the conclusion that it was the Lord himself who had come to him. This brought about a great transformation in him. He relinquished all his riches, went to Vijayanagara with his wife and children, took *dasa-diksha*, initiation into the path of the *dasas*, and was given the name Purandara-dasa by Vyasa-*raya*. He emotionally acknowledged the part played by his wife in his transformation: ‘Whatever happened, happened for good. It paved the way for the service of the Lord. [Called] to hold the *dandige* [a stringed instrument] in my hand I used to hang my head in shame. May the likes of my wife increase! She succeeded in making me hold the *dandige*.’

Purandara-dasa’s contribution to the Haridasa literature is immeasurable. He gave a new dimension to *devaranamas* as a form of literary expression. Through his mastery over language and poetic diction, and by way of his unique presentations, he has been a household name in Karnataka for centuries now. Purandara-dasa’s compositions are thematically multidimensional. We have songs praising the glories of the Lord. In others we find dialogues between the devotee and the Lord, wherein the trials, tribulations, joys, and sorrows of the inner life of an aspirant are vividly expressed. A major portion of his compositions recreate episodes from the Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Bhagavata. Those dealing with Krishna, Yashoda, and the gopis of Vrindaban have varied dramatic narrations. His compositions with a social message are also many in number.



Purandara-dasa is known for his deft use of words. Here is an example of his effortless use of simile:

When I meditate on you, O Lord, what harm can others do to me? What can they achieve by their jealousy when I am surrounded by your boundless mercy and when I repeat your name constantly? Do ants lay siege to fire? Will the dust that a scampering horse throws up envelop the sun? Is there anything that can go against one who has patience? Will the mountain tremble when the wind blows? If a thief tries to break open and seize the money which he sees in a mirror, can he get hold of it?⁶

In another song he equates the Lord's name with sugar candy; and this is how he urges people to get a taste of it:

O buy sugar candy, my candy so good!
For those who have tasted say naught is so sweet
As the honey-like name of the godlike [*sic*] Visnu.
My stock is not packed on the backs of strong
kine;
Nor pressed into bags strongly fastened with
twine.
Wherever it goes it no taxes doth pay;
But still is most sweet, and brings profit, I say.

Purandara Mandapa on the banks of Tungabhadra River, Hampi, where it is said Purandara-dasa composed many of his kirtanas

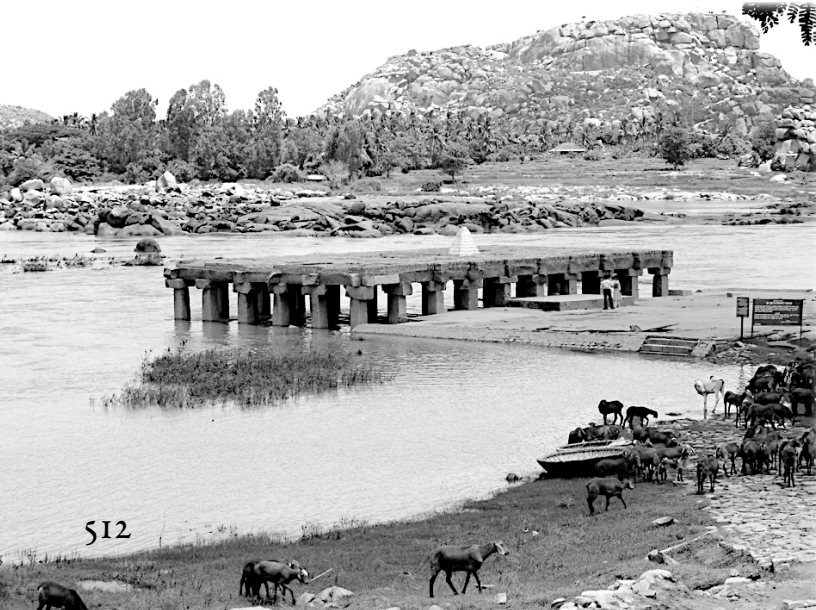
It wastes not with time; never gives a bad smell;
You've nothing to pay, though you take it right
well;
White ants cannot eat the fine sugar with me;
The city resounds as its virtue men see.
From market to market 'tis needless to run;
The shops know it not, the bazaar can have none.
My candy, you see, is the name of Visnu,
So sweet to the tongue that gives praise as is due.⁷

Kanaka-dasa

In the Haridasa literary tradition, Kanaka-dasa (1509–1607) is a name which stands on a par with that of Purandara-dasa, his contemporary. Kanaka-dasa was born in a village called Bada in northern Karnataka. It is said that he was brought up in a family of shepherds and later became an army chief. It is contended that he renounced worldly life in response to a divine call during a battle and became a Haridasa. He built a temple for Adikeshava, his chosen deity, at Kaginele. Later he went to Vijayanagara and took initiation from Vyasa-raya. Though he had the support and encouragement of Vyasa-raya, who recognised his inner mettle, he had to face many challenges from some narrow-minded brahmana pandits of the math. This fact was even recorded by Purandara-dasa in one of his compositions. Kanaka-dasa strongly criticized the practice of judging a person on caste basis:

They talk of *kula*, times without number. Pray tell me what is the *kula* of men who have felt real bliss? When a lotus is born in mire, do they not bring and offer it to the Almighty? Do not the gods of the earth drink milk, which comes from the flesh of the cow? Do they not besmear their bodies with deer musk? What is the caste of god Narayana and of Siva? What is the caste of the *Atman* and the *Jiva*? Why talk of *kula* when God has blessed you?⁸

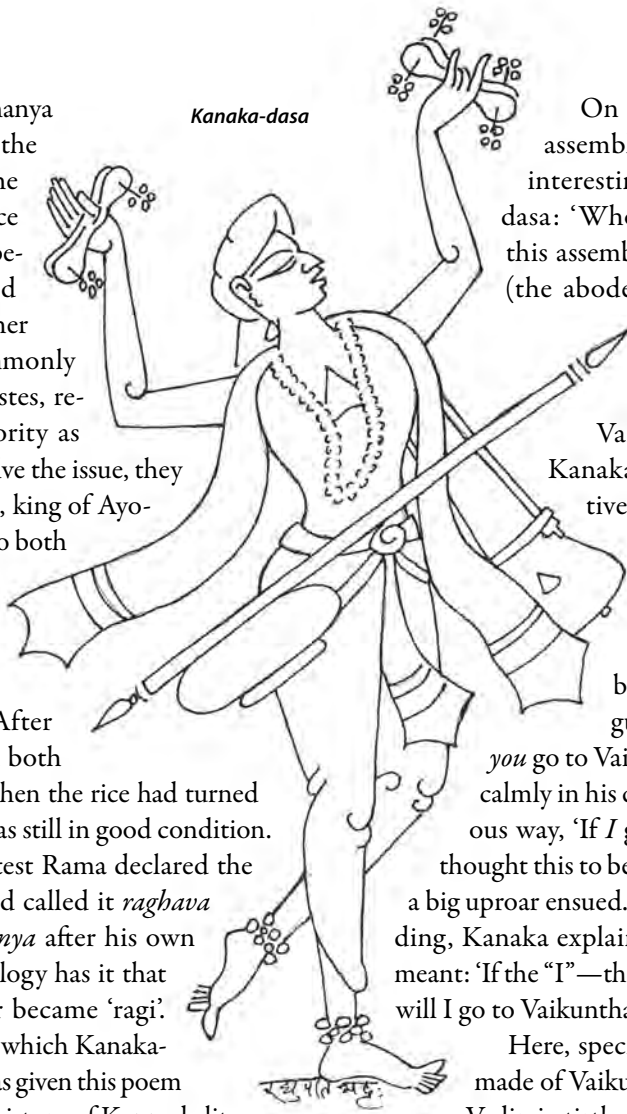
This 'caste dialogue' found expression in one of his remarkable poet-



ical works, 'Rama Dhanya Charite', the story of the cereal ragi. This is the gist of the story: Once there arose a quarrel between rice, consumed by the people of higher castes, and ragi, commonly used by the lower castes, regarding their superiority as cereal. Unable to resolve the issue, they approached Sri Rama, king of Ayodhya. Rama listened to both of them and, reserving his judgment, ordered that they be placed in the granary for some time. After the stipulated period both were called back. By then the rice had turned stale, while the ragi was still in good condition. On the basis of this test Rama declared the supremacy of ragi and called it *raghava dhanya* or *rama dhanya* after his own name. Popular etymology has it that *raghava dhanya* later became 'ragi'. The allegorical way in which Kanaka-dasa portrayed caste has given this poem a unique place in the history of Kannada literature and it is considered one of the major sources for socio-cultural studies on medieval Karnataka.

It is said that Vyasa-raya used to create some situations now and then to show the real worth of Kanaka-dasa to his other disciples. Once on an Ekadashi day, when fasting is observed as a religious practice, he called together all his disciples and gave them each a banana, with the instruction that nobody must see them eating it. The disciples hid themselves in different places of their choice and consumed their fruits. Kanaka-dasa, however, brought his fruit back. On being questioned by the guru, he replied: 'When the all-pervading Lord is observing everything in this universe, can one really get a place where nobody is watching?'

Kanaka-dasa



On another occasion, in an assembly, Vyasa-raya posed an interesting question to Kanaka-dasa: 'Who among the people of this assembly will go to Vaikuntha (the abode of Bhagavan)?' Pointing his finger at every person, he asked Kanaka, 'Will he go to Vaikuntha?' In each case Kanaka answered in the negative. Even when Vyasa-raya asked, 'Will I go?', the reply was the same. This was too much for the pandits and they began to fume. Finally, the guru asked Kanaka, 'Will you go to Vaikuntha?' Kanaka replied calmly in his characteristically ambiguous way, 'If I go, I go. ...' The pandits thought this to be a self-assertive reply and a big uproar ensued. Finally, at the guru's bidding, Kanaka explained what the statement meant: 'If the "I"—the ego—is destroyed, then will I go to Vaikuntha.'

Here, special mention ought to be made of Vaikuntha-dasa of Beluru and Vadiraja-tirtha of the Sode Math. Both contributed to the Haridasa movement in their own way. Though Vaikuntha-dasa belonged to the Ramanuja sect, he was very close to Vadiraja-tirtha, who held him in very high esteem. Vaikuntha-dasa is considered a great devotee and mystic, and Vadiraja-tirtha has composed hymns and songs both in Sanskrit and Kannada. His compositions are known for their devotional fervour. Later, the Haridasa movement received good support and nourishment from Sri Raghavendra-tirtha (1595–1671) of Mantralaya Math. However, only one composition of his is available today. Special mention may also be made of Mahipati-dasa (1611–1681), who gave a distinct mystical dimension to the movement through his compositions.

The Second Phase

The second phase of the Haridasa tradition begins with Vijaya-dasa (1687–1755). His former name was Dasappa. It is recorded that Purandara-dasa appeared to him in a dream and wrote his *ankita* or *kavyanama*, pen-name, ‘Vijaya Vitthala’ on his tongue and blessed him with the Haridasa initiation. This became a turning point in Vijaya-dasa’s life. He composed innumerable songs and had many disciples. He was responsible for the rebirth of the Haridasa tradition. The soul-searching seen in Vijaya-dasa’s compositions is especially noteworthy. This is how he prays to God to cure him of *bhavaroga*, the disease of worldly existence:

O Lord, healer of worldliness! What is this disease that I am suffering from? You do examine, having felt my pulse calmly. The eyes cannot perceive the image of Hari. The ears cannot hear the *kirtana* of Hari. The nose cannot smell the fragrance of the sandal-paste applied to Hari. The tongue cannot taste the offering made to Hari. The hands cannot move to worship the feet of Hari. The head won’t bow down at the feet of the elders and the preceptor; my feet won’t travel on pilgrimage to places associated with Hari; and the other limbs won’t move to serve Hari. O Vijaya Vitthala, the relative of the unprotected! You are my precious Lord. Therefore, remove this very dangerous disease of time immemorial. I shall never forget your favour.⁹

Another Haridasa who made a significant contribution to the Dasa literature is Prasannavenkata-dasa, a contemporary of Vijaya-dasa. He was from Bagalkot in the Bijapur district. He lost his parents at a very early age. Greatly depressed, he went to Tirupati. There he met some Haridasas and was inspired to tread the divine path. His craving for the Lord was so intense that he took a vow to fast unto death. It is recorded that Bhagavan Venkateshwara appeared to him in a dream and gave the Haridasa initiation as well as the *ankita* ‘Prasannavenkata’. Though he did not have much formal learning and was ignorant of the scriptures, he showed remarkable talent in composing songs after his initiation as a Haridasa.

The continuation of the second phase of the Haridasa movement can be mainly attributed to the disciples of Vijaya-dasa. Chief among them was Bhaganna, or Gopala-dasa (1721–62). The various levels of the spiritual unfoldment of devotional sadhana have found vivid expression in his compositions. This is how he describes the presence of the all-pervading Lord:

Wherever seen, there is not such a place where you are not. You are the indweller of all beings, and you are all-pervading. You are in grass, wood, and all animate and inanimate objects; and all praise you saying that there is nothing without you. Just as a lotus, though remaining in water, is not wetted by it, so also, you are the insinuator and the inner-dweller yourself. O Gopala Vitthala! the Lord of the Deities, only the learned know you and others do not. You yourself are the all-pervading face, eyes, hands, and palms of the universe. You are the all-pervading ears and the support of the universe. You are all-pervading and omnipotent. O Gopala Vitthala! You, who are the universe itself, do grant me devotion to your all-pervading feet.¹⁰

(To be concluded)

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5. See *Mystic Teachings of the Haridasas of Karnataka*, 102–3.
6. R S Mugali, *History of Kannada Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 1975), 80.
7. Translation by Charles Gower; cited in Edward P Rice, *A History of Kanarese Literature* (Calcutta: Association Press, and London: Oxford, 1915), 60.
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Sufism: **Message of Love and Humanitarian Service**

Dr Imtiaz Ahmad

SUFISM, or Islamic mysticism, represents the liberal and assimilative stream of Islam as distinct from the orthodox views of the *ulama*, theologians. While the orthodox emphasize the exoteric or 'outer' meaning of the teachings embodied in the Shariat, liberal Sufis believe in the *tariqat*, the esoteric or 'inner' contents of the teachings of Islam. The two are not mutually exclusive, but they differ on certain scores and this gives Sufism its distinct character. The name 'Sufi' owes its origin to the Arabic word *suf*, meaning wool. Around the early 8th century Islamic preachers in Khurasan, Central Asia, are known to have moved from place to place preaching the message of love for and devotion to God, brotherhood of all human beings, and humanitarian service without distinctions of faith and creed. Since they normally used woollen garments to protect themselves from the cold, these preachers came to be known as Sufis. With the passage of time the word came to be applied to all preachers and saints who believed in the esoteric teachings of Islam.

Initially, the new mystic ideas were rejected by the orthodox *ulama* as well as by the ruling class,

and the Sufis faced persecution. The execution of Mansur al-Hallaj, on charges of apostasy, is one major example. But the new ideas gradually gained acceptance and by the end of the 10th century the Sufis came to be accepted as a sect within Islam. It was around this time that the Indian subcontinent also witnessed the arrival of Sufi saints.

Going by historical accounts, the earliest eminent Sufi to have settled in India was Shaikh Ali bin Usman al-Hujwiri, more popularly called Data Ganj Bakhsh (d. after 1089), who settled in Lahore in the early 11th century. He was the author of the *Kashfal-Mahjub* (Unravelling the Hidden), which is the earliest text on Sufism by a saint who lived in India. His dargah still attracts a very large number of devotees from all over the subcontinent. Soon many other Sufis settled at places like Sehwan, Multan, and the coastal areas of western India. Their simple and pious lifestyle attracted devotees, and they were largely helpful in laying the foundations of Islam in the subcontinent.

By the 12th century Sufi saints had entered deeper into North and East India. They also came

Two pages from the
Kashf al-Mahjub

to be organized into mystic orders or *silsilas*. Hazrat Moinuddin Chishti (d.1236), who settled at Ajmer in the closing decade of the 12th century, is the most important figure of this phase of Sufism. Around the same time Imam Taj Faqih of Jerusalem came to Munyr, which emerged as the earliest centre of Islamic mysticism not only in Bihar but eastern India as well.

Over the centuries, different *silsilas* of the Sufis were founded in India. Writing in the 16th century, Abul Fazl, the renowned Mughal historian, mentions fourteen major *silsilas* of the Sufis in India. The more important of these were the Chishtis, the Suhrawardis, the Qadiris, the Shattaris, and the Naqshbandis. They played a major role in encouraging peace, tolerance, and goodwill in society. These *silsilas* and their various offshoots still enjoy popularity in the Indo-Pak subcontinent and command a very large following, mainly among Muslims but also among followers of other faiths.

Tolerance, Syncretism, and Social Conscience

The Sufis had an unforgettable and enduring impact on Indian society. They encouraged tolerance and religious syncretism. If the orthodox elements insisted on a policy of discrimination towards non-Muslims, the Sufis largely opposed such ideas and emphasized the oneness of all humankind. They asserted that all religions and faiths were essentially the same and represented different paths leading to the same destination, as we shall see later.

They also promoted syncretic religious ideas and practices. The impact of the Sufis on the bhakta saints of the *nirguna sampradaya*, worshippers of

the attribute-less Godhead, especially Sant Kabir and Guru Nanak, is too well-known to be detailed. The Sufis also imbibed Vedantic thought and the practices of the yogis, especially the Nath-panthis. The syncretic traditions are still reflected in Sufi rituals and, most importantly, in the multi-religious and multi-sectarian gatherings of devotees at the dargahs of Sufi saints. Popular customs, rituals, and practices—besides beliefs—arising from the values enshrined in Islam and Hinduism, and having a common content, are perhaps the most important components of the living heritage of Sufism in the Indo-Pak subcontinent.

The Sufis upheld moral values in society. They emphasized piety, simplicity, and self-denial. In a way they glorified poverty and rejected wealth. They condemned the social evils that were fast emerging in consequence of urbanization: slavery, usury, prostitution, use of intoxicants, and an indulgent lifestyle. They made the rich conscious of their social responsibility towards the less-privileged groups. They created an awareness of the rights of the deprived and oppressed to lead a dignified life with at least a minimum of comfort. They also aroused the collective social conscience in this respect.

Sufi Literature

Indian languages owe much to the Sufis. In their quest for a means of communication with the local people, they used local dialects and languages in their sermons and writings. They helped the evolution and enrichment of various Indian languages such as Urdu, Khari Boli, Punjabi, Gujarati, Sindhi, and Telugu. The contributions of Baba Farid (d.1265), Amir Khusrau (d.1325), Khwaja Gesu Daraz (d.1422),

Shaikh Ahmad Kattu (d.1446), and others can hardly be overlooked in this context. The rich literary heritage left by the Sufis in the form of *maktubat*, letters, *malfuzat*, discourses, and *tazkirat*, biographical accounts, are also a valuable source for the study of the religio-socio-cultural life of their times.

Sufi literature, both in Persian and vernacular languages, focuses on certain specific themes. The most important of these is the mystic relationship between humans and God. The second is the relationship between human beings and their mutual rights, *huquq al-ibad*. The third is the inherent oneness of different faiths. The fourth is the emphasis on love, tolerance, and respect for the sentiments of others. The fifth is humanitarian service. The oral preachings and writings of the Sufis are replete with such ideas and anecdotes. A few of these are reproduced in the following lines for the interest of the readers.

Persian Language Sources

The Sufis laid emphasis on an esoteric relationship between humans and God, a relationship that could be comprehended only through proper mystic experience under a *pir* or *murshid*, spiritual guide.

This found expression in two distinct ways:

Wahdat al-Wujud, Unity of Being,

and *Wahdat al-Shuhud*, Unity of Appearance, the former being influenced by Vedantic pantheism. Makhdum Sharfuddin Yahya Munayyri, the eminent 14th-century saint of Bihar, expresses the two dimensions of this relationship in some of his letters:

Without union with You,
of what use is my soul?
Without Your Beauty,
of what use is this world?
You don't become Him but,
if you try hard
You'll reach the stage
where 'you' depart!¹

Explaining the mutual re-

lationship among human beings, the Makhdum averred that an ideal Muslim is one who did not harm another Muslim either by word or deed. He also taught his disciples that hours of prayers and days of fasting were equal to a single act of kindness.² He advised his contemporary ruler Firozshah of Delhi to be impartial in the dispensation of justice, for 'an hour spent in the pursuit of justice was far superior to sixty years of worship' (67). He recommended self-restraint in all matters of life. He considered *nafs*, self, as the source of all evil and maintained that the best jihad was against the *nafs-i kafir*, the disobedient self.

Referring to human relationships, Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, the eminent 13th-century saint of Delhi, said: 'The right of a neighbour, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, is that you should advance him a loan when he requires it, help him when he is in need, visit him when he is sick, comfort him when he is in trouble, and attend his funeral when he dies.'³

Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti advised his disciples: 'Treat joy and grief alike; be patient in calamity; love the poor and despise the world. ... You

should be liberal like the river, kind like the sun, and humble like the earth.

Unless you show contentment in poverty, satisfaction in hunger, joy in sorrow, and love in the face of enmity, you cannot be a Sufi.'⁴

Rabia of Basra (d.752), the most towering name among lady-saints of the Sufi tradition, once remarked: 'If you walk on the river you are only a piece of straw, if you soar in the air you are only a fly; but if you win somebody's heart you are a true man.' On another occasion she said: 'I feel like putting paradise on fire and blowing off the fires of hell, so that men and women should do good deeds of their



A page from the Maktubat-e Sadi



Amir
Khusrau

own free will and not for the sake of paradise or fear of hell!’ (50).

There is a touching anecdote about an old woman’s visit to Makhdum Sharfuddin Yahya Munayri when he was preaching to his followers while observing a voluntary fast—a fast different from those ordained for the month of Ramazan. The woman was carrying some food in a clay pot and insisted on feeding the saint with her own hand. The saint took the mouthful offered by her, even though he was fasting. The old woman left happy. The disciples wondered how the saint could break the fast for the sake of the old woman. The saint’s reply is characteristic of the Sufi outlook: ‘There is a penance prescribed for breaking a fast; but there is no penance possible for breaking a heart!’⁵

On the inherent unity of all faiths, Nizamuddin Auliya (d.1325) said: ‘Every nation has its own way and its own faith.’ Hazrat Ahmad Chirmposh of Bihar observed: ‘I saw love as one and the true guide; I found it free from faith and infidelity.’ In another place, he wrote: ‘Love has served as the guide in all religions.’⁶ In his *Akhrayat*, Malik Muhammad Jaisi (c. 16th cent.) expresses the same sentiments: ‘Various are the ways of (reaching) God; they are as numerous as stars in the sky.’ We find an interesting echo of this sentiment in the Urdu poet Ghalib: ‘The essence of fidelity is consistency. So if a brahmana dies in the

idol-house (at the foot of the image he worshipped, revere him by) bury(ing) him inside the Kaaba (the most sacred site of worship for Muslims).’

Indian Language Sources

There are interesting examples of similar mystic thoughts in various Indian languages. A versified statement of Baba Farid in Khari Boli reads thus:

If the body could be purified only by taking bath,
the frogs would have surpassed the pious;
If one could attain greatness merely by sporting
a beard, none would have been greater than a
billy-goat;
If by playing with the soil you could be purified,
the cattle would have preceded all other beings.
The secret of love is unique.
There is no way (to unravel it) save the guidance
of the *pir*.

Baba Farid also popularized *zikr*, chanting the name of God, in Punjabi.⁷

Shaikh Bu Ali Qalandar (d.1323) of Panipat also wrote verses with similar content, both in Hindavi and in Persian. The following is an interesting example:

*Sajan sakare jaenge aur nain mareng roye;
Bidhna aisi rain ki bhor kadbi na hoye.* (Hindavi)

My love shall leave tomorrow and my eyes shall weep till death. May it be destined that this night never have its dawn!

And also:

*Man shunidam yar-e man farda ravad rah-e shetab;
Ya ilahi! Ta qayamat bar nayayad aftab.* (Persian)

I hear that my love shall depart tomorrow. O God! Let the dawn never break.

Perhaps the greatest name in this literary tradition is that of Amir Khusrau, a contemporary of Shaikh Bu Ali Qalandar and one of the most versatile personalities of the Sultanate period. In his compositions with mystic content, he ably combined Persian and Hindavi verses. An example is cited below:

*Shaban-e hijran daraz chu zulf o roz-e waslash
chu umr kotah;* (Persian)

*Sakhi piya ko jo main na dekhun to kaise katun
andheri ratein.* (Hindavi)

The night of separation is as long as the (beloved's) tresses and the day of communion is short like life. O friend, how can I bear with the dark night if I do not see my Love.

Amir Khusrau wrote extensively in Hindavi. His *pahelis*, riddles, *gits*, folk songs, and other compositions are still recited widely. He is also credited with popularizing Indian melodies and synthesizing them with Iranian ones to shape new tunes. Many of his compositions are based on these melodies.

Examples may be cited from other regions as well. For example, Khwaja Gesu Daraz of Gulbarga, Shaikh Ahmad Khatu of Gujarat, Shaikh Baha-uddin (d.1504) of Burhanpur, and many other Sufis preached and wrote in the respective regional dialects, enriched them, and facilitated their transformation into developed languages. In Bihar, Shaikh Sharfuddin Yahya Munayri also used the local dialects in his verses called 'Chakri'. He was so overwhelmed by these insights that he restricted the recitation of these verses only to those disciples who were deeply initiated into the mystic cult; otherwise there were chances of their being misled by the strong emotive content of the works.

Throughout the medieval period we come across a number of figures—like Qutban, Manjhan, Mulla Daud, and Raskhan—who may not have been formally associated with any of the Sufi *silsilas*, but who were nevertheless strong exponents of the mystic ideas of love, devotion, brotherhood, and humanitarian service in their vernacular writings. Examples also abound of persons who, though not formally initiated into the Sufi cult, followed these ideas in their day-to-day lives. The great emperor Akbar is described by his biographer Abul Fazl to have been often lost in deep meditation. Though not formally educated, he had a keen interest in mystic ideas and firmly believed in them. He was a devotee of the contemporary Chishti saint, Shaikh Salim of Fatehpur Sikri. His concept of *Sulh-e Kul*,

Peace with All, was essentially borrowed from the Sufi doctrine of peace and brotherhood among all human beings. He also evolved and enforced a concept of kingship based on a tolerant attitude towards different religious ideas. His eclectic ideas found expression in the *Din-e Ilahi*. Scholars differ in their perception of the *Din-e Ilahi*: some consider it a new faith propagated by the emperor, while others call it an eclectic code of conduct offered by the emperor to his close associates for voluntary acceptance and adoption. What is important, however, is that he encouraged religious debates and discussions among scholars in order to appreciate the inherent unity of all religions. The example was not totally lost after his passing. One of its finest practitioners was Dara Shukoh (1615–59), Shah Jahan's son, who sponsored the Persian translation of the Upanishads under the title *Sirr-e Akbar* (the Great Secret).

Coming to somewhat less-known examples, we have a remarkable figure in the freedom fighter Hasrat Mohani, who was an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna and would often participate in person in the rituals observed at Mathura to mark Lord Krishna's birth on the eighth day of the month



Maulana Hasrat
Mohani

of Bhadon. Many of his Urdu verses in praise of Lord Krishna are still popular. Another very notable figure is that of Mazharul Haque, one of the most important figures of the freedom struggle in Bihar, who was called *deshbhushan faqir*, 'the ascetic who is a jewel of the state', by Mahatma Gandhi. Mazharul Haq firmly believed in Hindu-Muslim unity. He believed that the two communities had a common destiny as the inhabitants of India. He also believed that it was their duty and privilege to work together for attaining that common destiny. As chairman of the reception committee of the twenty-seventh session of the Indian National Congress, held at Patna in December 1912, he dwelt on the existing communal harmony in Bihar with great satisfaction. He observed:

We in Bihar claim for ourselves the unique position of a people who are not troubled with the Hindu-Mussulman question. ... Any unfortunate difference that may crop up, as it occasionally does, passes away and leaves no permanent mark on the general good relations of the two great communities. Both are imbued with the same ideal, both work on the same platform and both try for the good of their motherland. As I have often said before, the solution of this question will prove the salvation of India. This is the question of questions, which every patriotic Indian should try to attack and solve. ... Often I have dreamed of a picture in my mind of 315 millions of human beings with one ideal, one aim, full of determination and enthusiasm, marching on the road of peaceful progress to the ultimate realisation of their destiny. Such a force would be irresistible anywhere in the world.⁸

In another speech that he delivered at Jharia in 1921 he reflected the tolerance and broad-mindedness of the Sufis when he said that 'cow-sacrifice should be abandoned forever. Why should they (the Muslims) wound the feelings of those with whom they had been living for a thousand years by sacrificing cows which are regarded by them as Deota, Mata. It is not lawful to cause hurt to the neighbour. The Muhammedan religion does

not require them to kill cows' (79).


The famous Urdu poet Iqbal, often wrongly accused of being the progenitor of the idea of 'Pakistan', composed poems glorifying Rama, Krishna, Buddha, and Nanak. He wrote in his *Naya Shivala*:

*Har subah uth ke gayein mantar wo mithe-mithe;
Sare pujaarion ko mai pit ki pila dein.*

Let us wake up every morning to the chant of sweet holy verses. Let all the worshippers partake of the wine of love.

*Shakti bhi shanti bhi bhakton ke git mein hai;
Dharti ke basiyon ki mukti prit mein hai!*

Strength and peace are both contained in the songs of the devotees. The deliverance of the inhabitants of the earth is inherent in love.⁹

This indeed is the most appropriate and touching tribute to the Sufis and bhaktas and to the relevance of their message for all times. 

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Sant Tulsidas

Swami Durgananda

BHAKTI, as an intense longing for God, is an existential fact. It is ever present at a deep level within us. Time and again mahatmas come and wake us up to the truth of this already existing wealth within us, our possession, our birth-right, which we must strive to reclaim.

Sant Tulsidas was one such mahatma whose heart melted in the white heat of love for God, whose pure, home-spun, and simple longing for God was to show direction not only to a few individuals, but to humankind at large; not only to one particular nation, but also across all borders; not only for a decade or two, but for centuries. Such saints do not direct just a small number of persons but wake up the divine consciousness in all humanity.

The Beginning

In sixteenth-century Rajapur—about 200 km east of Allahabad—in the Banda district of Uttar Pradesh, there lived a rather gullible brahmana couple: Atmaram Dube and Hulsī Devi. The year was 1532. One day, at a somewhat inauspicious moment, was born to them a male child. Even at this happy moment the mother was frightened. Born after twelve months of gestation, the baby was rather large and had a full complement of teeth! Under which unfortunate star this child was born is not known for certain. But it is believed that it was the asterism *mula* that was on the ascent then—a period of time known as *abhuktamula*. According to the then popular belief, a child born during *abhuktamula* was destined to bring death to its parents. The only remedy, it was believed, was for the parents to abandon the child at birth—or at least not to look at it for the first eight years!

The utterly poor father had nothing in his

house for the celebration of the child's birth or for the naming ceremony. Meanwhile, the mother died. Weighed down by circumstances and superstition, the father abandoned the child. Chuniya, the mother-in-law of the midwife who had helped during the birth of the child, wet-nursed him. Such was the child's fate that Chuniya too died after five years and he was left wandering, looking for morsels of food here and there, taking occasional shelter at a Hanuman temple. This was the boy who would later be recognized as Sant Tulsidas and excite bhakti *en masse* with his soul-stirring couplets.

Biographical Sources

The penchant of saints for self-abnegation and their aversion to renown and recognition make it difficult for biographers to obtain details about their lives. This is also true of Tulsidas. Benimadhdas, a contemporary of Tulsidas, wrote two different biographies: *Gosai Charit* and *Mula Gosai Charit*, the latter including more incidents. However, these books are full of fanciful details; they also contradict each other and the biographies written by others.

Tulsi Charit, a large volume of undated origin, was written by Raghuvardas. Although this work contains a lot of information, it cannot be accepted *in toto* as it too contradicts Tulsi's own works and those of other writers. The *Gosai Charit*, believed to have been written in 1754 by Bhavanidas, is another biography.

However, from Tulsi's own works, and through commendable scholarly research, a lot of information has been gathered about his life. But in his own works Tulsi gives no information about his youth or the grihastha period of his life. He does not even

tell us his father's name, though his mother does find mention in the *Ramcharitmanas*: '*Tulsidas hit hiyan hulsi si*; the story of Ram is truly beneficent to Tulsidas, like [his own mother] Hulsi.'¹

Spiritual Heritage

The longing for supernal beings is as old as human-kind itself. Ancient people worshipped the forces of nature to propitiate them or invoke their power. The Vedas are replete with prayers to Indra, Varuna, Agni, and other such gods. After the decline of the Vedic and Buddhist religions in India, the bhakti movement was ushered in by a host of saints. Sri Ramanujacharya (1017–1137), who gave bhakti a firm philosophic base and also popularized it, was one of them. We see the appearance of a disproportionately large number of saints from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. Swami Ramanand (c.1400–c.1470), born perhaps in Prayag, played a great role in paving the way for bhakti in North India during this period. Many saints, who ignited and spread the conflagration of bhakti across the land, appeared in the wake of Ramanand's advent. These included Kabir the weaver, Dhanna the peasant, Sena the barber, Pipa the king, Raidas the cobbler, and through Raidas, Mirabai. The great Tulsidas too may be counted as belonging to this tradition.

Ramanand is reputed to have been the fifth spiritual descendant of Sri Ramanujacharya. We have no record of the sayings of Ramanand, who perhaps preferred to spread the immortal message of bhakti through the radiant and glowing example of his own life. However, one song of his, included in the Guru Granth Sahib, is evidence enough of his insight: 'Where shall I go? The music and the festivity are in my own house, my heart does not wish to move, my mind has folded its wings and is still. One day, my heart was filled to overflowing, and I had an inclination to go with sandal and other perfumes to offer my worship to Brahman. But the *guru* (teacher) revealed that Brahman was in my own heart. ... It is Thou who hast filled them all with Thy presence. ... It is the word of the *guru* that destroys all the million bonds of action.'²

Childhood

Such was the turn of events when Narharidas, a descendant of Ramanand, was commanded in a dream to pick up an abandoned boy and instruct him in the timeless story of Sri Ram. He spotted the boy, who at that time went by the name Ram-bola³, took him to Ayodhya, and completed his sacred-thread ceremony. From a reference to a tulsi leaf used during that ceremony, Narharidas named him Tulsiram, which later became Tulsidas. After about ten months of living in Ayodhya, guru and disciple left for Sukar-khet—or Sukar-kshetra, now known as Paska, near Ayodhya, at the confluence of the rivers Sarayu and Ghagara—where they lived together for five years. It was here that Tulsidas heard the fascinating story of Sri Ram. We can well imagine what fire must have been ignited in the boy Tulsidas when the immortal story of Sri Ram fell upon his pure heart.

Another sadhu, Shesha Sanatana by name, now came into Tulsidas's life and took him to Varanasi, the city of learning. It was here that Tulsi learned Sanskrit, including Panini's grammar. We read that Tulsi was extremely bright, could remember texts after hearing them only once, and became adept in Sanskrit. That he had a good command of Sanskrit can be known from his few Sanskrit writings and the Sanskrit words, apposite and accurate, thrown casually but widely into his other works.⁴

Marriage and Renunciation

Tulsidas married a girl whose name was Ratnavali. We are told that the simple couple lived at Rajapur and that their only son, Tarak, died in infancy. Tulsidas was extremely devoted to his wife. This attachment may have been an inchoate form of bhakti—wrongly directed towards a human being—for it was this love, when freed from human attachment, that blossomed into an unbounded love for God.

Once his wife had started for her paternal home. An infatuated Tulsi rushed behind her at night, across the Yamuna. Upon reaching her, Tulsi was chided by his wife:

*Hada mamsa-maya deha mam, taso jaisi priti;
Vaisi jo sri-ram-mein, hot na bhav bhiti.*⁵

Had you for Sri Ram as much love as you have for my body of flesh and bones, you would have overcome the fear of existence.

An apparently simple and innocuous expression of annoyance brought about a conversion in Tulsidas's mind, which must have already been pure, well disposed, and awaiting the proper hint. Such inner volte-face is not an uncommon phenomenon; innumerable instances have been recorded in the lives of saints of all religions.

Tulsidas renounced his house and wife and became a peripatetic monk. He travelled the length and breadth of India, visiting, as he went, the four *dhamas* and other holy places. How many souls must have been blessed and inspired by his peerless words and how many raised to sublime heights of spirituality during his peregrinations we can only imagine.

The Ramcharitmanas

Tulsidas finally reached Varanasi. Here he had a divine command to go to Ayodhya and write the immortal epic of Sri Ram in the local dialect.

At a subtle level, legends and myths can carry more of reality than so-called real, sensible, and provable facts. And a legend has it that Sri Ram had himself approved Valmiki's Ramayana by putting his signature on it. After that, Hanuman wrote with his nails on stone another Ramayana and took it to Sri Ram. Sri Ram approved it also, but as he had already signed Valmiki's copy, he said he could not sign another, and that Hanuman must first approach Valmiki. He did so, and Valmiki realized that this work would soon eclipse his own. So, by a stratagem, he induced Hanuman to fling it into the sea. Hanuman, in complying, prophesied that in a future age he would himself inspire a brahmana named Tulsi, and that Tulsi would recite his—Hanuman's—poem in a tongue of the common people and so destroy the fame of Valmiki's epic.⁶

At any rate, Tulsidas went to Ayodhya. In a se-

cluded grove, under one of the banyans, a seat had already been prepared for him by a holy man who told Tulsidas that his guru had had the foreknowledge of Tulsidas's coming. It was 1575, the Ramnavami day. As per legend, the position of the planets was exactly as it was when Sri Ram was born in the bygone age of Treta. On that auspicious day, Tulsidas commenced writing his immortal poem: the *Ramcharitmanas*.

The composition of the *Ramcharitmanas* was perhaps Tulsidas's own sadhana, his act of prayer and offering. It is an expression of creativity that blends the inner and outer worlds with God. It is an inner experience expressed in the form of legend through the vehicle of poetry. He wrote for two years, seven months, and twenty-six days, and completed it in Margashirsha (November–December), on the anniversary of Sri Ram's marriage to Sita. He then returned to Varanasi glowing with the bhakti inflamed during the period of writing the devotional epic and began to share his ineffable experience with others. Because of Tulsidas's good demeanour, loving personality, and exquisite devotion, people would gather round him in large numbers.

That in Varanasi, the stronghold of orthodoxy, erudition, and Sanskrit learning, resistance should develop towards the growing popularity of the unsophisticated Tulsidas is not surprising. Two professional thugs were employed to steal his *Ramcharitmanas*—with printing not available in those days only a few copies existed. When the thieves entered Tulsi's hut at night they saw two young boys, one of blue complexion and the other fair, guarding the work with bows and arrows. The terrified thieves gave up their plan and the next day informed Tulsidas of their experience. Tulsidas shed tears of joy, for he realized that Sri Ram and Lakshman had themselves been the guards.

The Vinay-patrika

A criminal used to beg everyday with the call: 'For the love of Ram, give me—a murderer—alms.' Hearing the name of Ram, the delighted Tulsidas

would cheerfully take him inside his house and give him food. This behaviour of Tulsi infuriated the orthodox brahmanas, who demanded an explanation. Tulsidas told them that the name 'Ram' had absolved the person concerned of all his offences. This attitude of Tulsi incensed the people further. In a fit of anger, they demanded that if the stone image of Nandi—the sacred bull in the temple of Shiva—would eat out of the hands of that murderer, then they would accept that he had been purified. A day was fixed and to the consternation of the people the Nandi image actually ate from the murderer's hands. The brahmanas had to eat humble pie.

However, this did not settle matters. This event increased Tulsidas's popularity even more and enraged the already defeated people afresh, triggering off more attacks and assaults. The troubled Tulsidas then turned to Hanuman for help. Hanuman appeared to him in a dream and asked him to appeal to Sri Ram. Thus was the *Vinay-patrika* born. It is a petition in the court of King Ram. Ganesh, Surya, Ganga, Yamuna, and others are propitiated first, just as the courtiers would be approached first. Then follows wonderful poetry soaked in bhakti:

*He Hari! Kas na harahu bhram bhari;
Jadyapi mrisha satya bhasai jabalagi
nahin kripa tumhari.*

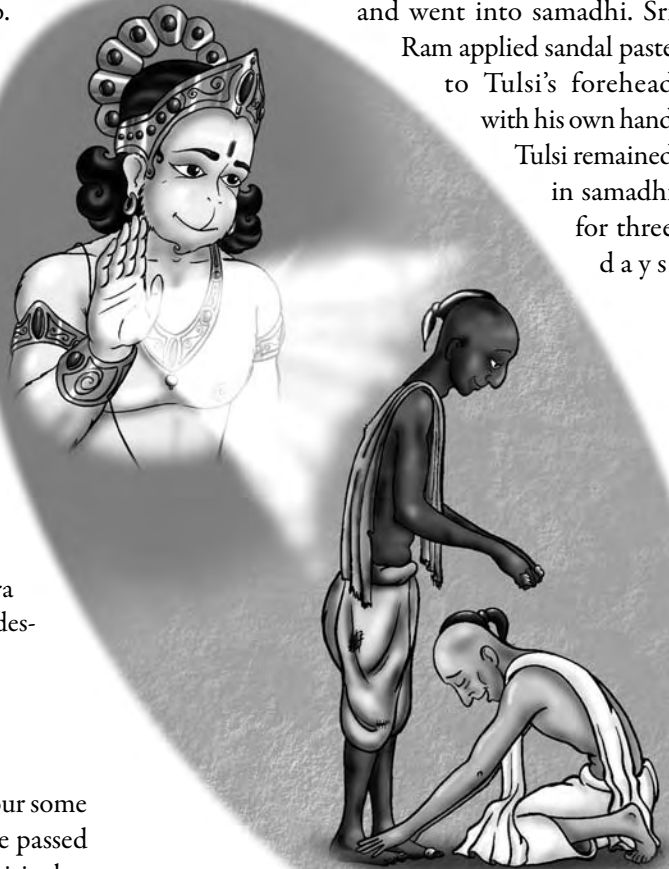
O Hari, why do you not remove this heavy illusion of mine (that I see the world as real)? Even though the samsara is unreal, as long as your grace does not descend, it appears to be real.⁷

Darshan of Sri Ram

Another legend tells us that Tulsi would pour some water at the base of a banyan tree when he passed that way after his morning ablutions. A spirit that was suffering the effects of past evil deeds lived on that same tree. Tulsi's offering relieved the spirit of

its agony. Wanting to express gratitude to Tulsi, the spirit asked him what he wished. What else would Tulsi want but the holy darshan of Sri Ram? The spirit replied: 'An old man attends your discourses; he arrives first and is the last to leave. He will help you.' The next day Tulsidas identified the man who answered to the description and fell at his feet. The old man told Tulsi to go to Chitrakut, where he would have the darshan of Sri Ram. Who could the old man be but Hanuman himself? It is well known that Hanuman is always present wherever the name 'Ram' is being uttered.

Tulsi remained in Chitrakut, making sandal paste and giving it to the devotees who came there. One day, while he was making the paste, Sri Ram appeared in front of him and said: 'Baba, give me some sandal paste.' Tulsi was overwhelmed and went into samadhi. Sri Ram applied sandal paste to Tulsi's forehead with his own hand. Tulsi remained in samadhi for three days.



This was the first time he experienced samadhi—and that through the darshan of Sri Ram himself!

Once during his visit to a temple of Sri Krishna in Vrindavana, Tulsidas addressed the deity: 'How can I describe your heavenly beauty, O Krishna! However, this Tulsi will not bow to you unless you take bow and arrow in your hands!' In a moment, Tulsi had a vision of Sri Ram instead of Sri Krishna on the altar!

It is believed that Emperor Jahangir knew about Tulsidas and that they met at least once. Jahangir pressed Tulsidas to perform a miracle. Tulsi refused saying: 'I know no miracles, I know only the name of Ram.' Annoyed at the answer, Jahangir imprisoned him. The legend narrates that a band of monkeys wrecked havoc in the prison and the emperor, realizing his mistake, had to release Tulsi.

The famous pandit Madhusudana Saraswati of Varanasi was a contemporary of Tulsidas. The two devotees discussed bhakti when they met. In an answer to someone's enquiry, Madhusudana Saraswati praised Tulsidas thus:

*Ananda-kanane byasmin-jangamas-tulasitaruh;
Kavitamanjari bhati rama-bhramara-bhushita.*⁸

In this blissful forest (Varanasi), Tulsidas is a mobile tulsi tree; resplendent are its poetic blossoms, ornamented by the bee that is Rama.

The End

Towards the end of his life Tulsidas suffered from very painful boils that affected his arms. At this time he wrote the *Hanuman Bahuk*, which begins with a verse in praise of Hanuman's strength, glory, and virtue, and is followed by a prayer to relieve him of his unbearable arm pain. The disease was cured. This was the last of the many pains that Tulsidas suffered on earth. He passed away in 1623⁹ at Asighat, Varanasi.

One interesting incident in Tulsidas's life is quite representative of his teachings. Once a woman, who happened to stay behind after Tulsidas had delivered a discourse, remarked during the course

of conversation that her nose-ring had been given to her by her husband. Tulsidas immediately directed her mind deeper saying: 'I understand that your husband has given you this lovely nose-ring, but who has given you this beautiful face?'

The Ramayana

Before we appraise the works of Tulsidas, a review of the Valmiki Ramayana, the Sanskrit classic that inspired him, will be instructive. The Ramayana is an epic that has kept not only India but the entire Hindu world spell-bound and it has been chiefly responsible for giving Hindu culture a general direction. It is broad in scope and provides guidance for all the stages of one's life—incidentally, *ayana* means journey (of life).

Human life, in all its facets and fancies, twists and turns, ups and downs, is on display in the Ramayana. People of different spiritual states derive different light and meaning from the text in accordance with their need and understanding. Ordinary human life can be sublimated and bhakti cultivated through a study of the Ramayana.

The Ramayana of Valmiki includes characters as they are and as they ought to be. Rama, Sita, Kausalya, Bharata, Hanumana, Janaka, and others are ideal characters. Dasharatha, Kaikeyi, Lakshmana, Shatrughna, Sugriva, and others have been presented as beings with mixed qualities. Ravana, Kumbhakarna, and other rakshasas are portrayed as personifications of abominable qualities. Rama plays the role of an ideal son, disciple, brother, master, husband, friend, and king. Subject to human emotions and weaknesses, Rama is a supernal god in human form—but conversely, he is also a human who has ascended to be an adorable god.

Rama's bow and arrow symbolize a force that guarantees peace and justice. Rama's is the ideal of 'aggressive goodness' as opposed to 'weak and passive goodness'. Rama does not, however, kill or destroy; he rather offers salvation to those he battles. This is technically called *uddhara*.

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Vedantic Views of a Portuguese Poet

Alvaro C M de Vasconcellos

IT is perhaps an act of boldness, or of bravery, or of sheer irresponsibility to try and relate Fernando Pessoa to Vedanta. He was not, by any standard, a follower of the Vedanta philosophy per se. Neither would he fit comfortably into Buddhism, Judaism, Taoism, Christianity, Islam, or any other great tradition. As a member of one of the Rosicrucian societies he would have been dubbed an 'esoteric'; he could also be regarded as a pagan or, in the Celtic sense, a naturalist. At best he was an eclectic, pluralist, ecumenical soul. Whether a natural inclination towards these qualities—which lie at the heart of Rosicrucian doctrine—drove him to join this society, or whether it was from there that he later imbibed them, we cannot now say.

Rosicrucianism puts its members in touch, at least theoretically, with all the great spiritual traditions and philosophical schools of the world, and teaches them to look on all with both critical distance and benign acceptance. Pessoa would most certainly have become acquainted with Vedanta through the cultural environment he was associated with in the early twentieth century. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda were landing in Europe through Romain Rolland and others, and Tibetan writings were being introduced through Madame Blavatsky, whose *Voice of Silence* he would later translate into Portuguese.

First Steps

Fernando Pessoa was born in Lisbon on 13 June 1888. Hardly had he turned five when his father died from tuberculosis, and the following year also saw the premature passing of his one-year-old brother Jorge. Shortly after this his mother met Fernando's future stepfather, a diplomat, who in 1895 was appointed as interim consul at Durban.

One year later, mother, stepfather, and the boy all travelled to South Africa.

In 1896 Fernando Pessoa was enrolled in a Catholic convent school to begin his education, and in 1899 he was admitted to the Durban High School. Four years later, aged fifteen, he took the entrance exam for the University of Cape Town and was awarded the Queen Victoria Memorial Prize for his outstanding English paper. The recipients of this prize were automatically entitled to a full scholarship at Oxford; but Pessoa was not an Anglo-Saxon, and in consequence he was deprived of the prize's benefit.

However, were it not for the prejudice of the English-speaking authorities of the Cape University, Fernando Pessoa might never have become the great Portuguese poet that he did. Educated at Oxford, and brilliant as he was, he would most probably have stayed in Britain and oriented himself to an equally brilliant career as a British poet—his first poems were in fact in English. Let us take a look at two of them and see how the search for something spiritual, in the Vedantic sense, was reflected even in his first steps. Both the following sonnets were written in 1918, when he was thirty years old.

Whether we write or speak or do but look
We are ever unapparent. What we are
Cannot be transfused into word or book,
Our soul from us is infinitely far.
However much we give our thoughts the will
To be our soul and gesture it abroad,
Our hearts are incommunicable still.
In what we show ourselves we are ignored.
The abyss from soul to soul cannot be bridged
By any skill of thought or trick of seeming.
Unto our very selves we are abridged
When we would utter to our thought our being.

We are our dreams of ourselves souls by gleams,
And each to each other dreams of others' dreams.

In these lines Pessoa shows us that we are not what we seem to be; and what we really are cannot be easily grasped, much less put into words. Our soul, our subjectivity—the key to all true knowledge—is something to be sought after, though in the beginning the goal appears to be very far away. If we try to solve the problem by the exertion of sheer will-power we shall not become whole. The 'trip' will be shortened only if we offer our true self to our thoughts; our selves would then simply be the last recipients of our experiences.

When in the widening circle of rebirth
To a new flesh my travelled soul shall come,
And try again the unremembered earth
With the old sadness for the immortal home,
Shall I revisit these same differing fields
And cull the old new flowers with the same sense,
That some small breath of foiled remembrance
yields,
Of more age than my days in this pretence?
Shall I again regret strange faces lost
Of which the present memory is forgot
And but in unseen bulks of vagueness tossed
Out of the closed sea and black night of
Thought?

Were thy face one, what sweetness will't not be,
Though by blind feeling, to remember thee!

Pessoa was familiar with the concept of metempsychosis, or reincarnation, and seems to have had the personal experience of hunger for his true self, for his true nature. 'The old new flowers' is suggestive of an experience not limited to one particular lifespan, and 'Were thy face one' is equally provocative. To a more superficial eye he could be speaking of a friend or loved one, as sometimes it would appear in the writings of Rumi or Kabir; but, as it often was with these two great saint-poets, Pessoa may in truth have been speaking of Brahman, of the Absolute.

A Rishi

The excerpts of the two poems that follow, both

amongst the largest and most cherished ones in Portuguese, require an introductory explanation. Fernando Pessoa signed the majority of his poems under four different names—his own, Alberto Caeiro, Alvaro de Campos, and Ricardo Reis. Each of the names other than his own he termed a 'heteronym'—a word that actually has a different meaning in linguistics and grammar than the one he intended to convey. Nevertheless it attributed him with the birth of a new literary concept: whereas a pseudonym simply affords a false name, a heteronym allows the author to create an imaginary character complete with its very own personality and writing style. Bilingual in Portuguese and English, Pessoa was also fluent in French and wrote poems in all three languages. His first heteronym, aged six, was 'Chevalier de Pas', French for 'Knight of the Step', 'Knight of the Pass', or—most probably—'Knight of the No'. He is known to have used at least seventy-two different heteronyms.

Let us now consider the mood and style of the author's principal heteronyms. Alberto Caeiro, of 'The Shepherd', is trying to come to terms with himself—and seems to be managing to do so. He has the vocation and the spirit of a Zen Buddhist sage or a Sufi saint. Alvaro de Campos, of 'The Tobacco Shop', though older, is more angry, more of a non-conformist—but I hope that the reader will observe the connection between the two, and the searcher in both. An extract from 'The Shepherd', written in Portuguese¹ between 1911 and 1912, reads:

There's enough Metaphysics in thinking about
nothing.
What do I think of the World?
What do I know?
If I were ill, I'd think about that.

What ideas have I engendered about things?
What opinions have I formed about causes and
effects?
What meditations about God and the soul
And the creation of the World?

I do not know. To me, thinking about those
things
Is closing my eyes and not thinking at all!

Is to run the curtains over my windows
Which have no curtains.

The mystery of things? What do I know?
The only mystery is the existence of people
Who engage in these thoughts.
He who basks in the sun and closes his eyes
Soon becomes ignorant of what the sun is
And starts thinking of many things wrapped in heat.
But he opens his eyes and sees the sun
And can no longer think about anything at all,
Because the sunlight is worth more than the
thoughts
Of all philosophers and poets.
And it does not know what it does
And therefore makes no mistakes
And is plain and good.

In the first four lines Pessoa criticises metaphysics as being synonymous with morbid intellectualism, morbid mentalism—perhaps a heritage from Nietzsche. The intellectual path alone leads nowhere. It is necessary to have one's mind at peace—not to think of anything—to be able to learn, and progress, and find salvation, illumination. A consequence of this process of 'lightening' the mind is the typical scepticism of searchers and finders, sages and saints—'What do I Know?'—as well as an awareness that attachment to and identification with one's own mind is a form of illness—I'd think about nothing, if I were ill.

After a reiteration of the above comes the unmasking of the 'mysterious', where we find an echo of Swami Vivekananda's 'The Open Secret'. Mystery? What mystery? Fix your mind and there will be no more mystery—the only mystery is that of our derailed minds. But if one can look at Reality face to face, without the intermediation of conscious speculation—Plato's noesis—that 'is worth more than the thoughts of all philosophers and poets'.

The last three lines present the ethics of the process: If one can act without knowing consciously what one is doing, if one can truly and with absolute trust put oneself into God's hands, then all will be 'plain and good', and one will not make any mistakes. Krishna and St Paul would certainly agree.

Now some remarkable verses of 'The Tobacco Shop', written in January 1928:

I am nothing.
I shan't ever be anything.
I cannot wish to be more than anything.
Apart from that, I bear within myself
All the dreams of this World.

He is nothing. He cannot be anything. He cannot even wish to be something. And yet, he is everything! He possesses all possible dreams, which are the expressions of his true Self. He bears the divine spark!

Today I am perplexed,
As someone who has thought and found and
forgotten.
Today I am divided between the loyalty
I owe to the tobacco shop on the other side of
the street,
As something external and real,
And the inner sensation, equally real,
That everything is but a dream.

Consciously or unconsciously, he has reached the concept of maya. He is aware that what we call reality may be but a dream, and that Reality lies somewhere else altogether.

The world is for those who were born to conquer it,
Not for those who dream of conquering it,
No matter how right they may be.

Krishna could have said that phrase to Arjuna, in the beginning of the Gita, when they were arguing hard ethics!

I rise energetic, convinced, human,
And will try to write these verses
In which I say the opposite.
I light a cigarette, while thinking of writing them,
And as I savour it, I experience
The liberation from all thought.
I follow the smoke as if it had a route of its own,
And in a sensitive and competent moment,
Behold the deliverance from all speculation,
And the consciousness that metaphysics
Is a consequence of being ill at ease.

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Beyond Belief and Disbelief

Swami Sarvagatananda

The subject of belief and disbelief is with us from the beginning of our existence. Belief is very simple. We are all born as creatures of belief. We are all believers from the very beginning of our existence. Three things were given to us when we came to this world: hope, faith, and love. We need to hold on to them; we must not lose them. Children have these. They hold on to hope, faith, and love. We have to keep each in good condition, never lose or distort them.

Children are believers. As they grow and gain knowledge and experience, their belief patterns get fashioned. At times they get disturbed and lose their ground—because of the family set-up, the social set-up, the educational set-up, and the religious set-up. When these are not in accord, children begin to feel doubt. Belief and doubt go together. Belief and disbelief go together.

Every moment of our lives is threatened because of the lack of harmony in society. But we have to grow. We get into schools and are confronted with the cry of secularists against religious groups. The noise is severe. Why is there a difference in these patterns of belief? Young minds fail to grasp the difference and they are slowly disturbed. Faith is disturbed, and so belief is disturbed. You cannot help it. The modern concept of state and society is such that it constrains the individual to doubt everything.

The easiest way for young adults to get rid of doubt is to behave irresponsibly, not to care for life. Study of the scriptures does not help them; they lack

confidence. There is a phrase: ‘the crisis of unbelief, the crime of belief.’ Those who do not believe in life do not care for anything. And those who do believe are dogmatic. That is how society is going. Communities are being built on belief and disbelief.

Many times we praise our founding fathers for the great service they have done to us by removing references to religion from the state and the educational systems. At the same time, we hear the voices of the presidents of universities looking for an ethical standard. They do not understand that religion, which unfortunately also brings dogma, generates the value system. When you throw out the Bible, you dispose of the commandments, and the wonderful revelation received by Moses, ‘I am that I am.’ Thrown out are the Beatitudes and the wonderful teachings of Muhammad. These teachings are embedded in the scriptures.

So, how can we make our people moral and ethical? Hardly anyone cares if we give a lecture. People listen to the scriptures: Great persons said it, let us pay attention! The worst are the believers. Non-believers become reckless and irresponsible. Believers become criminals and warmongers.

Saints and Scriptures Agree

Muhammad used to tell his followers: ‘Not one of you is a true believer until you wish for others what you wish for yourself.’ It is not belief in a person. People have really forgotten his powerful message of universal brotherhood. It is the same in other religions. No prophet said it in this unconditional way; they always put a condition. Jesus Christ said: ‘If you love me, follow my commandments. Keep my sayings.’ Lately we seem to have forgotten these teachings. We do not care about any of them. The young student is tossed between belief on the one

This is a minimally edited transcript of a Sunday lecture delivered by the author on 4 December 1994 at the Ramakrishna Vedanta Society, Boston. Several of the passages cited by Swami Sarvagatananda in this article are only rough paraphrases of the original texts.

hand and disbelief on the other. Life evolves with what to accept and what to reject. Once I heard some students declaring boldly, 'We don't care for your moral and spiritual values. Jesus will save us. He died on the cross for our sake. He is our saviour.' All the people from the clergy simply looked on in silence. This blind belief has no meaning at all. It does not help anybody. It creates trouble throughout the world. It results in an eventual disbelief. We have to throw it away.

Truth is not within belief and disbelief. It is beyond that. It is unheard of that the direct disciples of Sri Ramakrishna would say, 'Believe this.' Sri Ramakrishna always said: Discuss, question, think, and then accept! I remember an incident when we were with a direct disciple of Sri Ramakrishna on one occasion. Someone interjected candidly, 'I don't believe in so and so.' He was very frank. Others were puzzled. He gave reasons for his opinion. Then the senior swami said: 'That is not it! Study the lives and teachings of all prophets of the world. Then note what helps you for moral and spiritual growth. Do not worry about the rest. Do not argue or criticize. Accept the teachings, and you discover to your joy that the prophets do not disagree from the point of view of moral and spiritual values. Read and discover.'

He gave an example: Suppose you go to a mango orchard. You want to collect some mangoes. What do you do? You take the best mangoes and walk away. There would be many that are not fully developed, and some would have fallen on the ground. You would not go on criticizing and arguing why some had fallen down or why some were not developed. That is also true for the scriptures. Take the best, put them all together and see that they all agree. That is what Swami Vivekananda said in the Parliament of Religions. Purity, holiness, truth, and compassion are not the exclusive virtues of any particular religion. Every religion cherishes these.

Why Should I Believe in God?

The word belief is a peculiar word. In science, we do not bring in the subject of belief. Even though we cannot see all the objects it deals with, we ac-

cept them because of their effects. No one has ever seen an atom. We have had enormous discussions about it during the last hundred years. We have discovered its tremendous potential and enormous power. From the power released we have to surmise that the atom exists.

Suppose someone says, 'I don't see God.' Nobody can take out God from their pocket and show it. This person would say, 'How do you know he exists then? I don't believe in God.' We do not use the same scientific evaluation when we use the word God. God is not a thing or a term. It is a spiritual force. It is the cosmic conscious realm, the 'Ground of Our Dwelling'. No one can show it to you and you cannot see it. Sri Ramakrishna plainly said that none could know what God is. Jesus Christ said that the Father could not be known except through the revelations. Moses discovered, heard the voice, presented it to us, and we believed it. All prophets said similarly. God is to be discovered.

The question is this: 'If I don't see God, why should I believe in him?' This question was put not to an ordinary person, but to the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi: 'Mother, how do we know so and so has realized God?' Mother said: 'He does not grow two horns; if you find somebody who is unselfish, all loving, and has deep concern for the well-being of others, this person has realized God.' Just find these three attributes: unselfishness, all lovingness, and deep concern for the well-being of others. There you would find some experience of God, she said. You cannot show it. From the effect you see the cause.

When Freud described our human existential realm, he said: 'We all work with our conscious mind, and the subconscious guides us. We do not know the cause of that subconscious realm, but we know the effect of it.' From the effect only we can know the cause. Do not worry about the cause but observe the effects. On many occasions we do not see the main thing, we see the effects. From that we draw the conclusion. In science we accept, swallow it. In religion if anybody attempts to draw a conclusion from an effect, we do not like it. It is considered careless thinking.

Einstein beautifully explained this situation. 'People do not believe in God. I believe,' he said. 'I believe not as they explain, I come very close to Spinoza's substance.' Substance is a beautiful word. Shankaracharya used this word and called it *vastu*. That substance is behind everything. Sometimes we call it by the word 'nature': Nature functions, nature has done everything. But there is a tremendous super-intelligent force behind this nature, this entire Creation. You can call it by any name. That substance is there. We do not see it, yet it is functioning. It makes the natural laws perfect, sets them well. It does not require any belief to accept this. You have to just think about it.

Think for Yourself!

Much of our belief is caused by mental laziness. Our disbelief is also caused by mental laziness. We do not want to use our brains to try to determine what this is all about. If you do not think, you become a victim. All prophets who realized God had studied the teachings very carefully. They were very cautious about their terms. It is not in individuals that we believe; it is their propositions and their teachings. These help us.

Belief and disbelief threaten us always, because we do not want to think deeply and we accept authority blindly. Somebody came to Buddha and asked him questions. He said: 'Why do you ask these questions? I am not an authority. Simply because a big book tells you something, do not accept it. A great man tells you, do not accept it. Think for yourself. Do not abandon your rational faculty. Think for yourself.' Buddha always avoided argument. He never asked anyone to believe in him. One thing he said: Believe in Truth. Ask these questions: 'Is it true? What is the truth behind this?' Truth will be your saviour. Do not believe in any person.

Swami Vivekananda during his tour of the Western world never asked anybody to believe in him. 'Believe in all prophets,' he said one day. 'I bow down to the prophets of the past, prophets of the present, and prophets yet to come.' You have to be-

lieve in them all. Follow them. Take up what is useful for you, for your spiritual growth. There is no contradiction among them. Personalities have destroyed us. Do not believe in personalities. When you study science you do not say: 'I only follow Einstein and nobody else.' Scientists are discoverers of natural laws. Prophets are discoverers of spiritual and moral laws. We have to bow down to them and learn from them. But never say, 'I believe.' The word 'believe' is a wrong word. Similarly, 'disbelieve' is another wrong word.

Beyond belief and disbelief lies the truth. You have to think. You have to live your life in a responsible manner. To make or mar your life, every one of you is responsible. No God is there to lift you up. You have to lift yourself up. Learn from all. Do not worry about your personal belief or disbelief. Ask the questions: 'Which is the most important among the things that I learn? What is it that helps me to live well—individually and collectively—with peace inside, peace outside? What helps me?' You are to search for answers in the teachings of all prophets. If I believe one, I believe all. There is no exclusion here. Singular belief is dangerous. 'Do you believe this, do you believe that?' is a self-defeating exercise.

A student from Harvard University went to India to collect statistics. He told me: 'Swami, I asked many people. Fifty percent said they did not believe in God. The other fifty percent believed in God.' The student asked: 'What do you do when you believe?' The respondents said: 'We don't do anything.' 'Do you go to temples?' 'No.' He returned without any serious finding. Belief and disbelief evaluated as statistics on the road do not produce any meaningful results.

How Best to Educate Our Children

I am not worried about the statistics. My main concern for our society is with regard to our young children. We have to inculcate moral and spiritual values into their minds without stressing the words 'belief' and 'disbelief'. How can we teach them so they can grow, evolve, and gain depth? We must

not teach about beliefs. That does not help. All religions are great. All founders of great religions are wonderful people. But you must go to the very core, find out: What did they teach? What is it that I have to bring to my day-to-day life? These are the important questions.

Dr Radhakrishnan, a former president of India, thus defined the secular state: 'A secular state is not an irreligious state. It respects all religions. We accept and respect all religions. In that sense ours is a secular state. We do not deny religions, we need them.' Here in the US, we have also been declared a secular society. Though secular, we have put 'In God we trust' out of necessity. As the proverb goes: 'We all pay cash and in God we trust!' The statement 'In God we trust' is not very meaningful. Some also think that it conflicts with the basic value of secularism and respect for all religions.

We have to respect all religions and all prophets. We have to find a place in our educational system for the teachings of all these great individuals. Without that there will be an unfortunate narrowing down to cults, creeds, and beliefs. Proper education is our only hope. The situation when I came to the United States in 1954 and the situation now in 1994 are very different. It is a troubling comparison. I am not very happy about it.

What is wrong with our society? It does not have moral and spiritual values. It only champions dogmas, creeds, and beliefs. Religious preachers emphasize this point. It does not work. At times, I feel that religion should not be taught in churches, synagogues, or temples. Its place is in schools and colleges, not as dogmas but as moral and spiritual values. Like Will Durant's *Story of Philosophy*, we should have a *Story of Prophets*—all their lives and what they have taught us. There should not be any touch of creed or belief. We have to bring out their lives and put them before our children. Let the children imbibe the spirit, not as a belief but as a need. Today's needs are moral and spiritual values. Behaviour is important—not your conviction but your conduct; your functioning, not your faith. Then alone is there hope for our society; otherwise not.

We Must Value Values, not Beliefs

The rest of the world imitates the United States. When the US sets a pattern and throws it out into the world via videos and TV, the whole world catches it like fire. America is not one ethnic group. People from all parts of the world have come with their cultures and with their religions. They are in the US as one big human family. There is a place for everyone. Here we have to discover a wonderful pattern of education, where the moral and spiritual values of all religions are taught—not as beliefs, but as the wonderful teachings of the prophets. Then alone we can have some hope for the future.

We have to find out a new pattern of presenting religions without any kind of creed-based outlook. We must stress more moral and spiritual values, not beliefs. Then there is hope. Human society cannot remain static—either it moves up or it goes down. If you have a good ideal, you move up; if you do not, you go down. This is going on in cycles. If you do not pedal your bicycle, you fall down. Keep on moving. Human life is like that. Keep a goal. If we just relax, that is the end of it.


We cannot afford to relax, because it is not just about one or two persons, it is about the whole society. New children are coming up. What food are we going to give them? We have not got it ourselves. What can you give them? Go to churches. What do they preach? 'Believe this.' The dogma does not help anybody. This is true for all religions. We must bring home the moral and spiritual values, not the beliefs. By believing in Christ, believing in Muhammad, you do not go to heaven. You have to follow them.

What a beautiful statement Jesus Christ made: 'Love your enemy, bless him that curses you, pray for him.' See the Old Testament: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. Love your neighbour as yourself.' Who is your neighbour? The whole world is your neighbour. The entire humanity is your neighbour! Actually, these two commandments contain everything. They do not define God. You act ac-

cording to your own precept and according to your own inner feeling. Love with all your heart, soul, and might. Love your neighbour as yourself. And these are the most important things that we have to remember and pass on to our children.

Question, Question, Question!

The truth lies beyond belief and disbelief. You have to ask the question: 'What is the truth about this?' In science, we ask such a question. Why do we not ask the question in religion? 'Is it real? Is it true?' By

asking the question you will analyse it and get the answer. There is no mental laziness here. We have to work hard. Every individual has to work hard because the family and the children are there. I am more concerned about the children, how they can be given some good food for thought and analysis. Truth lies beyond belief and disbelief. We have to ask these questions: 'What is the reality? What is the meaning of all these things?' We ask the question and get the answer. We have to pass it on to the next generation. 

(Continued from page 525)

There are many other versions of the Ramayana: *Adhyatma Ramayana*, *Vasishtha Ramayana*, *Ananda Ramayana*, *Agastya Ramayana*, *Kamba Ramayana* (Tamil), *Krittivasa Ramayana* (Bengali), and Ezuttachan's *Adhyatma Ramayana* (Malayalam), among others. Although these differ in disposition, flavour, emphasis, amount of details, and length of each *kanda*, canto, they all describe the life of Rama and are inspired by the *Valmiki Ramayana*.

(To be concluded)

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3. Goswami Tulsidas, *Vinay-patrika*, 76.1.
4. For example, *Ramcharitmanas*, 3.4.1–12, 3.11.2–8, 7.108.1–9 and *passim*; *Vinay-patrika*, 10–12, 50, 56–60.
5. Ramji Tiwari, *Goswami Tulsidas* (New Delhi: Sahitya Academy, 2007), 11.
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8. Rajapati Dikshit, *Tulsidas aur Unka Yug* (Varanasi: Jnanamandal, 1975), 16.
9. *The Cultural Heritage of India*, 4.395.
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(Continued from page 528)

Again the idea that there is a correct tuning of the mind which produces bliss.

... I go to the window.
A man comes out of the tobacco shop,
Keeping the change in one of his pockets.
Ah, I know him. It's Estêves, without any metaphysics.
The tobacconist also comes to the door.
As by some divine intuition,
Estêves turns and spots me and waves me goodbye.
I shout: 'Hello, Estêves!'
And the universe recomposes itself,
Without any ideal or hope,
And the tobacconist smiles.

The direct perception of things, without any speculation. 'The universe recomposes itself, without any ideal or hope'—without any desire, the father of expectation. Only then can the tobacconist smile; moreover, only then can Fernando Pessoa *perceive* the tobacconist's smile.

Several of Pessoa's perceptions, captured in an intimate poetic form, reveal that universal essence spoken of in Vedanta. Then, though not a 'formal' Vedantist, was not he one? Yes, and a very dear one to Portuguese-speaking hearts. 

Note

1. English translations of 'The Shepherd' and 'The Tobacco Shop' are mine.

Narada Bhakti Sutra

Swami Bhaskareswarananda

(Continued from the July issue)

63. Strī-dhana-nāstika-(vairi)-caritram na śravaṇīyam.

One must not listen to talk about women, wealth, atheists, (and enemies).

THERE must be no evil impressions—especially those of lust, money, and materialistic forces—in a sadhaka. He already has past impressions of these, ready to spring up like wolves and tigers to destroy his life on getting an opportunity. There is a general tendency in sadhakas engaged in karma to make compromises. For this reason Narada emphatically says: *na śravaṇīyam*, one ought not even listen. The more men listen to talk about women, the more will the impressions already in the mind get activated. So, this discipline must be undertaken without compromise.

Kāñcana, *dhana*, money, is another counterforce. Don't relish it. Similarly, people with materialistic tendencies must be avoided without any compromise. Such people have many ideas opposed to bhakti. Our mind is already weak, and contrary ideas will only make it weaker. For example, we might start thinking that we need not be very strict in the practice of brahmacharya, and that one should be 'moderate' in one's practice.

64. Abhimāna-dambhādikam tyājyam.

Pride, conceit, and the like must be given up.

Control of outer objective counter-forces is not enough. The subjective counter-forces must also be controlled. Pride and vanity must be removed.

The text comprises the edited notes of Swami Bhaskareswarananda's classes on the *Narada Bhakti Sutra*, taken down by some residents of the Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur. The classes were conducted between 17 December 1965 and 24 January 1966.

The sadhaka generally forgets the enemies within.

65. Tad-arpitākḥilācāraḥ san kāma-krodhābhimānādikam tasminn-eva karaṇīyam.

Having surrendered all actions to God, one must direct lust, anger, pride, and the like towards him alone.

The inner evil forces come up one after the other, and it appears impossible to control them. Narada shows the way: change the direction. Surendra had great attraction for sense enjoyment. Sri Ramakrishna asked him to offer the objects of enjoyment to the Divine Mother and then take them as offerings. This ultimately transformed him. Change the direction of all the drags and pulls. Have *abhimāna*, pride, in your relation to God and the ideal of bhakti. Say to God: 'Why don't you give me perfection though I am trying for it?'

66. Trirūpa-bhaṅga-pūrvakam nitya-dāśya- nitya-kāntā-bhajanātmakam prema (eva) kāryam premaiva kāryam.

Merging the trinity (of love, lover, and beloved), one must worship God as his eternal servant, his eternal bride—love alone is to be offered unto God.

After purification of the mind the sadhaka will achieve transcendental consciousness. This sutra tells us that the sadhaka should love God transcendently, without the ego—*trirūpa-bhaṅga-pūrvakam*.

Whatsoever be the form of love—*śānta*, serene, *dāśya*, servant-like, *sakhyā*, friend-like, *vātsalya*, motherly, *madhura*, conjugal—there should be no subject-object consciousness. Be a servant of the Master, but with the consciousness that he is

the reality of your being and of the whole world, the all-pervading Reality, one without a second. This is transcendental *dāśya bhāva*. After having attained *nirvikalpa samādhi*, Swamiji said: ‘*Dasa tava janame janame dayanidhe*; O ocean of mercy, I am your servant, life after life.’

If you are a practitioner of *śānta bhāva*, have transcendental *śānta bhāva* based on the consciousness of the one Reality; so also with all forms, all *bhāvas*. Through this transcendental love you will have transcendental consciousness of your identity with the Reality and attain *parā bhakti*.

67. Bhaktā ekāntino mukhyāḥ.

One-pointed bhaktas are the best.

The nature of ideal bhakti has been described. The negative and positive sadhanas have also been told. The practical life of the sadhakas has been taken up and they have been asked to beware of negative forces. They have also been advised to seek the company of *mahāpuruṣas* and surrender to them. Now Narada concludes this topic by stating again the nature of bhakti and the transformation it causes in the personality. He shows the contrast between an ideal bhakta and other types of devotees.

Ekānta, one-pointed, means one who has complete absorption in or absolute identification with God. He lives in Him. His physical, mental, and intellectual, or conscious, subconscious, and unconscious phases and aspects of personality are merged in the absolute Reality alone. There may be many devotees, but this is the highest. His thinking, feeling, and willing are God and God alone. This is the *ekānta* consciousness. This statement also indicates that the grade of bhakti in a person is determined according to the one-pointedness towards and identification with God.

68. Kaṇṭhāvarodha-romāñcāśrubhiḥ parasparam lapamānāḥ pāvayanti kulāni pṛthivīm ca.

With choked voice, horripilation, and flowing tears, embracing other devotees, they sanctify their families and the whole world.

Extreme expressions of the consciousness within takes place automatically in such bhaktas. Narada did not describe these external changes earlier because such expressions can be produced even by shallow sentimentalism, pretence, or nervous weakness, and this may mislead devotees. Hence Narada first gives the inner criterion of *ekāntatā*.

Another sign is that the devotee's personality becomes dynamically sanctifying. *Pṛthivī* means the place where he lives.

69. Tīrthī-kurvanti tīrthāni sukarmī-kurvanti karmāṇi sacchāstrī-kurvanti śāstrāṇi.

They sanctify the holy places, works, and the scriptures.

The sanctifying aspect of such a personality and the value of association with him is being reiterated. The pond where he takes his bath becomes a *tīrtha*, a place of pilgrimage. Karma done by him is considered *sukarma*, holy action, because that karma is the expression of his transcendental consciousness. Karmas done with a different consciousness could be good or bad. But evil karmas are impossible in the case of such a bhakta, because his consciousness is identified with the transcendental Absolute, this state being termed *ekānta*.

The Shastras are considered the revelations of such a personality, as his words are authentic. The revelations of the Shastras are once again revealed through him, and thus their authenticity is re-affirmed.

70. Tanmayāḥ.

They are one with God.

71. Modente pitaro nṛtyanti devatāḥ sanāthā ceyam bhūr-bhavati.

The manes rejoice, gods dance in joy, and this earth gains a saviour (when a sadhaka attains parā bhakti).

The glory of realization is presented here, so that the sadhaka may make bhakti his ideal. If you wish to be saved from the troubles and tribulations of which this earth is full, follow the ideal bhakta who

is the saviour of the whole world.

72. Nāsti teṣu jāti-vidyā-rūpa-kula-dhana-kriyādi bhedaḥ.

For such bhaktas there is no difference of caste, learning, beauty, birth, wealth, action, and the like.

Due to his transcendental realization, there is no limitation in the consciousness of the ideal bhakta—limitations like caste, beauty, birth, and so forth. For him, all these are only forms of the one Reality. If you want to be a real bhakta, you will have to transcend all limitations.

73. Yatas-tadiyāḥ.

Because they are God's.

Why are all these results—purity, limitlessness, and the like—produced? Because of that one realization and basic consciousness.

In describing and glorifying the ideal bhakta, Narada indicates for us the importance of association with such personalities. The sanctity of pilgrimages and the authenticity of the Shastras will be felt more through association with these great personalities.

Sant Jnaneshwara's Prayer

And now may God, the soul of the universe,
Be pleased with this my offering of words.
And being pleased may He give me
This favour in return.
That the crookedness of evil men may cease,
And that the love of goodness may grow in them. ...
May the multitude of those who love God,
And shower on men all forms of blessings;
May they constantly, on this earth,
Come in touch with its living beings.
May this forest of walking wish-trees, ...
May this talking sea of nectar,
May these moons without dark spots,
May these suns without fierce heat,
May all these ever-good men,
Be the close kin of mankind.

—Stotramala, 180

74. Vādo nāvalambyaḥ.

Arguments are to be avoided.

75. Bāhulyāvakaśatvād aniyatatvācca.

Because there is no end to them and they lead to no satisfactory result.

After listening to all this, instead of an attitude of sadhana, a tendency for argumentation and discussion may arise. One may mistake it for actual spiritual life, considering it *śāstra-carcā*, scriptural study. But its root is in the small self, the ego, and it makes the mind extrovert.

Understanding is different from argumentation. Understanding means tallying our thoughts with the Shastras, and if they don't tally, revising them in their light. Argumentation means seeing whether the Shastras or other's thoughts match with 'my' thoughts. If not, then you argue to make others change their thoughts according to your thoughts. This tendency based on 'my' must be given up before any positive result can be attained. Therefore, Narada mentions it first.

76. Bhakti-śāstrāṇi mananīyāni tad-udbodhaka-karmāṇi karaṇīyāni.

Read books dealing with this love and perform actions which increase it.

Yajñavalkya said to Maitreyi: '*Ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ*'; the Atman must be seen.' How? By *śravaṇa-manana-nididhyāsana*. Here, Narada emphasizes *manana*. Only reading won't do. Gain conviction from the Shastras, driving away all doubts. Study devotionally and critically the Shastras that explain bhakti and you will get convinced that wherever there is 'I and mine', there God is not.

For meditation, purity is required; and for this, Narada asks us to perform karma, which in itself creates a psyche akin to bhakti. Not any karma, but *tad-udbodhaka* karma, karma that inspires bhakti. Such karma will bring God into your consciousness and purify you.

(To be concluded)

Girish and the Devotees of Sri Ramakrishna

Swami Chetanananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

ONCE, while Girish was pondering his own death, he thought: 'Well, death is slowly approaching. What will happen after death? I do not know where I shall go.' Girish was thinking in this way when M came to visit him. M started to talk with Girish about the Master. Suddenly, in an inspired mood, Girish said to M: 'Brother, could you beat me with your shoes? I am not joking. I am serious.' M smiled and asked the reason for such a request. Girish replied: 'To tell you the truth, I deserve a shoe-beating. Sri Ramakrishna is sitting within my heart and is always protecting me. Yet I wonder what will happen to me after death!'⁵

Many years earlier, when Sri Ramakrishna was suffering from cancer, Girish went to see him at the Kashipur garden-house. On 23 April 1886 M recorded in the *Gospel*:

It was about dusk. Girish and M were strolling near the small reservoir in the garden.

Girish: 'I understand that you are writing something about the Master. Is it true?'

M: 'Who told you that?'

Girish: 'I have heard about it. Will you give it to me?'

M: 'No, I won't part with it unless I feel it is right to do so. I am writing it for myself, not for others.'

Girish: 'What do you mean?'

M: 'You may get it when I die.'⁶

However, M published four volumes of *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* between 1902 and 1910. After reading the first three volumes Girish wrote to M on 22 March 1909: 'If my humble opinion goes for anything I not only fully endorse the opinion of the great Swami Vivekananda but add in a loud voice that *Kathamrita* has

been my very existence during my protracted illness for the last three years. ... You deserve the gratitude of the whole human race to the end of days.'⁷

Devendranath Majumdar

Devendra and Girish had been friends long before they met Sri Ramakrishna. Once the Master went to see one of Girish's plays at the Star Theatre, where Girish had arranged a special seat for him. Devendra and Latu accompanied him. After the performance, Girish, who was drunk, humiliated the Master and used abusive language. Latu became furious and Devendra stopped him from hitting Girish. The next day Devendra went to Girish's house and said to him: 'When you drink you lose control of yourself and talk nonsense. You should go to Dakshineswar and apologize to the Master.' But Girish replied: 'No, I shall not go to

Dakshineswar. And I shall not apologize either. Whatever qualities he gave to me I offered back to him. I've been fasting and crying all day. Doesn't he know it? If he is an avatara, doesn't he realize what I am suffering? He will have to come here. Otherwise I shall not eat any food. I shall starve to death.' It was raining. At four o'clock in the afternoon Sri Ramakrishna came to Girish's house with Ramchandra Datta. Girish fell at the Master's feet, and Sri Ramakrishna blessed him.⁸

One evening when Swami Vivekananda was returning from Dakshineswar with Devendra, he said to him: 'Look at the Milky Way. It is just like a stream of milk. Do you know that every moment millions of suns and moons are being formed within it? That is the source of the stars. Just imagine what an inconceivable Being is the ruler of this vast universe! And a tiny man with his limited intellect is trying to fathom and comprehend Him! Is He so easily obtainable?' After listening to Swamiji, Devendra was absorbed in the thought of the Infinite. He then concluded that it was not possible for a man to realize God. This greatly troubled him, and he could not sleep for three days. At last he went to Girish and told him the cause of his anxiety. Girish said to him: 'But it is also true that the ruler of this universe, from whom this cosmic creation evolves, incarnates himself in a human body and gives liberation to sinners like us.' Devendra was relieved to hear this (338).

In 1893 Girish became the director of the Minerva Theatre and hired Devendra as a cashier and supervisor. Devendra was a faithful worker. When Girish noticed that his handwriting was good and that he could write quickly, Girish also engaged him to take dictation. Several of Girish's dramas were thus written down by Devendra (338-9). Girish had sincere love and respect for Devendra, regardless of the fact that Devendra was his employee. If necessary, as a friend and well-wisher, Devendra would scold Girish and point out his mistakes, and the latter would humbly confess his error.⁹ To err is human. But a weak man does not admit his mistakes, nor does he want to change his ways. A strong man, however, admits his mistakes

boldly and corrects himself accordingly. Girish was a strong man of many good qualities.

Nag Mahashay

Durgacharan Nag, known as Nag Mahashay, was a great lay disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and a close friend of Girish. He was an embodiment of humility, and his austerities defy description. The Bhagavata says, 'He who has controlled the tongue has controlled everything.' To curb his desire for delicacies, Nag Mahashay did not use salt or sugar in his food. Once he lived for two or three days only on rice bran. He often abstained from food and water for days. He also gave up shirts and shoes and wore only a plain cloth and a cotton shawl. Observing his austerities and self-effacement, Girish remarked, 'Nag Mahashay has knocked on the head of his rascal ego so severely that it cannot raise its hood anymore.'¹⁰

Towards the end of Nag Mahashay's life, when his reputation as a holy man drew people to his home in Deobhog [in Bangladesh] to seek his company, he frequently left home secretly to visit Calcutta. The first place he went upon reaching Calcutta was the Kalighat temple, where he would bow down to the Divine Mother. Then he would leave his cloth bundle at his Calcutta residence and go straight to Girish to pay his respects. He once said of Girish: 'If one is in the company of Girish Babu for even five minutes, one is freed from worldly delusion. He has such keen insight that he can see at a glance the innermost recess of a man's heart, and by virtue of this powerful insight he was able to recognize the Master as an avatara' (245).

Girish had tremendous love and regard for Nag Mahashay. He knew that Nag Mahashay did not accept gifts, but in spite of that one day he gave him a blanket. Out of his deep respect for Girish, Nag Mahashay put the blanket on his head and went home. A devotee went to visit him later that day and found him seated, with the blanket on his head. When Girish heard of this, he found a tactful way of taking it back so that Nag Mahashay might not suffer any further discomfort (*ibid.*).

Years before, when Sri Ramakrishna had introduced Nag Mahashay to Swami Vivekananda, he said: 'This man has genuine humility. There is no hypocrisy in it.' Humility was one of the main traits of Nag Mahashay's character. 'I and mine' are the warp and woof of maya, which bind the soul; these were totally obliterated in his personality. Girish once humorously remarked that the great enchantress, Mahamaya, was in trouble when she tried to bind Swami Vivekananda and Nag Mahashay: 'As she tried to trap Vivekananda he became bigger and bigger, and at last he became so big that all Her fetters were too short and She had to let him go. And when She attempted to trap Nag Mahashay, he began to make himself smaller and smaller until he had at last reduced himself to such a degree that he could easily slip through the holes of Her net' (ibid.).

One day Nag Mahashay was at Girish's house with other disciples and devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. They were speaking about the Master when Swami Niranjanananda turned to Nag Mahashay and said: 'Well, sir, our Master used to say that one who thinks of himself as mean and wretched actually becomes so. Why then do you always think of yourself as so low and degraded?' Nag Mahashay replied: 'Ah, I see with my own eyes that I am low and degraded. How can I think that I am Shiva? You can think like that. Girish Babu can say that he is Shiva. You have such great devotion for the Lord. Where is such devotion in me? If you all help me, if the Master grants me his grace, my life will be blessed.' The utter sincerity and humility of his words silenced Niranjanananda; he could neither contradict him nor pursue the subject any further. Girish later said, referring to the incident: 'If a man is sincere, and if all idea of egotism has really vanished from his mind, he attains the state of Nag Mahashay. The earth becomes blessed by the very touch of the feet of such great men' (245-6).

Once Nag Mahashay came to visit Girish and the latter asked him about his father: 'Sir, is there any difference in religious views between you and your father?' Nag Mahashay replied: 'No, there is no more difference between us. My father also repeats

his mantra day and night. But he is still attached to me.' Girish: 'It is his good fortune that he loves a great soul like you.' Shaking his head like a boy, Nag Mahashay said: 'Sir, what will it avail? My father is rowing an anchored boat. How far will his mind go repeating the mantra while having attachment for his son?' Girish and others were moved as they listened to this wonderful devotee of the Master.¹¹

Girish told this story about Nag Mahashay: 'Once at Kashipur garden-house the Master expressed a wish to eat an amalaki, but it was not the season for that fruit. When Nag Mahashay heard about the Master's wish, he left home in search of an amalaki in the suburbs of Calcutta. He continually searched for three days and finally found a few for the Master. The Master's wish or words were like the words of the Vedas. Practising severe austerities and looking for an amalaki were equal to him. Such devotion for the guru is rare in this world, and it will remain an ideal forever' (2.97).

Shashibhushan Ghosh

Shashibhushan Ghosh, a devotee and a biographer of Sri Ramakrishna, asked Girish: 'Did you ever hear the Master say, "If a person takes one step towards God, God comes ten steps towards him?"' Hearing this Girish became excited. He slapped the floor and replied loudly: 'Shashi, I never heard those words spoken by the Master. Neither do I know nor do I care for those words. But this I definitely know, that I did not take a single step. The Master himself took ten steps towards me and blessed me.'¹²

Ramchandra Datta

Girish and Ramchandra Datta were staunch devotees of Sri Ramakrishna and both believed that he was an avatara. Girish wrote:

I first met Brother Ram when the Master was visiting him at his Simla residence in Calcutta. Then I met him at Dakshineswar, and he took me to the secluded Panchavati. He had heard from Deven Majumdar that I considered the Master to be an avatara. He was excited because he also had the same opinion about the Master. Brother Ram was

excited and expressed his belief in a choked voice: 'Do you understand, Brother Girish? This time all three—Sri Chaitanya, Nityananda, and Advaita—are united in the form of Sri Ramakrishna. Love, devotion, and knowledge are equally manifested in this present Incarnation.'

From that day on I became his dearest friend and we met frequently. He would come to the theatre and talk to me only about the Master. Whatever I said he accepted wholeheartedly without any question. If anybody contradicted my statement, Brother Ram would vehemently attack him and say: 'What! You want to contradict Brother Girish? The Master has said, "Girish has one hundred twenty-five percent faith and intelligence."' I observed that Brother Ram was an extremely wise and skilful person. Day and night he would think about what he could do for the Master, how he could preach the Master's message and serve him. The Master said, 'Ram is very devoted to me.' Inviting the Master, Brother Ram would arrange a festival in his house as well as in other devotees' houses. When he invited the Master to his own home, he used to consult me about the menu and what delicacies should be offered to the Master.¹³

In September 1885 Sri Ramakrishna moved to Shyampukur, in the northern part of Calcutta, for his cancer treatment. Ram took an active part in the arrangements that were made for the Master's care. As the day of Kali Puja approached, the Master expressed a desire to celebrate the occasion with a worship of the Divine Mother and asked the devotees to collect the necessary materials. Accordingly, they procured flowers, fruits, sweets, sandal paste, incense, and candles. When the auspicious time came, they placed those things in front of the Master, thinking that he would perform the worship. There was no image. The devotees sat around the Master silently waiting, but he remained absorbed in meditation. All of a sudden the thought came to Ram's mind: 'It is needless for the Master to perform worship. We shall worship him.' Ram whispered this idea to Girish, who responded: 'What do you say? Is the Master waiting to accept our worship?' Immediately Girish took some flowers and offered them to the Master, saying,

'Victory to Sri Ramakrishna! Victory to Mother!' The hair of the Master's body stood on end and he entered into samadhi. His face was radiant with a divine smile. The rest of the devotees also offered flowers to the Master and were blessed.¹⁴

Girish recalled an event that occurred a few months later at Kashipur: 'The day the Master became the Kalpataru [the wish-fulfilling tree], Brother Ram was beside himself. My brother Atul said: "On that day I received the blessings of the Master by the grace of Ram. I was standing on one side and watching the whole thing. Ram grabbed my hand and pulled me in front of the Master, who then touched me." Atul and other devotees were deeply moved by Brother Ram's love and compassion.'¹⁵

Ram Datta wrote *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsadever Jivanvrittanta*, a short biography of Sri Ramakrishna in which he included a chapter entitled 'Girish, a Heroic Devotee'. Ram wrote:

Girish was extremely religious, but he did not care for so-called Hinduism. His character was complex. He was not only an alcoholic but would take all kinds of drugs, such as hemp, opium, and so on. Once a devotee asked the Master to tell Girish to give up drinking. The Master replied: 'Why do you have such a headache over him? He who is his guide will decide whether he should give up drinking or not. Moreover, he is a heroic devotee; drinking will not do him any harm.'

The Master highly praised Girish's devotion, but this irritated him. He would say: 'Master, I don't care for advice. I want to see action. I am now as I was before.' Afterwards, one evening he began to drink with a couple of his friends, who then passed out. But he belched once and his drunkenness was gone. He drank a second bottle, and then a third. His stomach was full of alcohol but still he was not intoxicated. At first he was surprised, then he was disgusted and he stopped drinking. Girish was a very obstinate person. No one could stop him once he decided to do something. The Master knew his nature, and for that reason he never forbade him to drink.

Girish's devotion was incomparable. We noticed how the Master was exceedingly happy whenever he saw Girish. The Master remarked

that he had never seen another man as intelligent as Girish. After giving Ramakrishna his power of attorney, Girish did not practise any spiritual disciplines. His mind dwelt in Ramakrishna, and this gave him peace. He became a man of divine wisdom, as was evident in his dramas—*Buddhadev-charit*, *Vilwamangal*, *Nasiram*, *Rupa-Sanatan*, and so on. We know that his dramas opened the door of religion in the hearts of many people.¹⁶

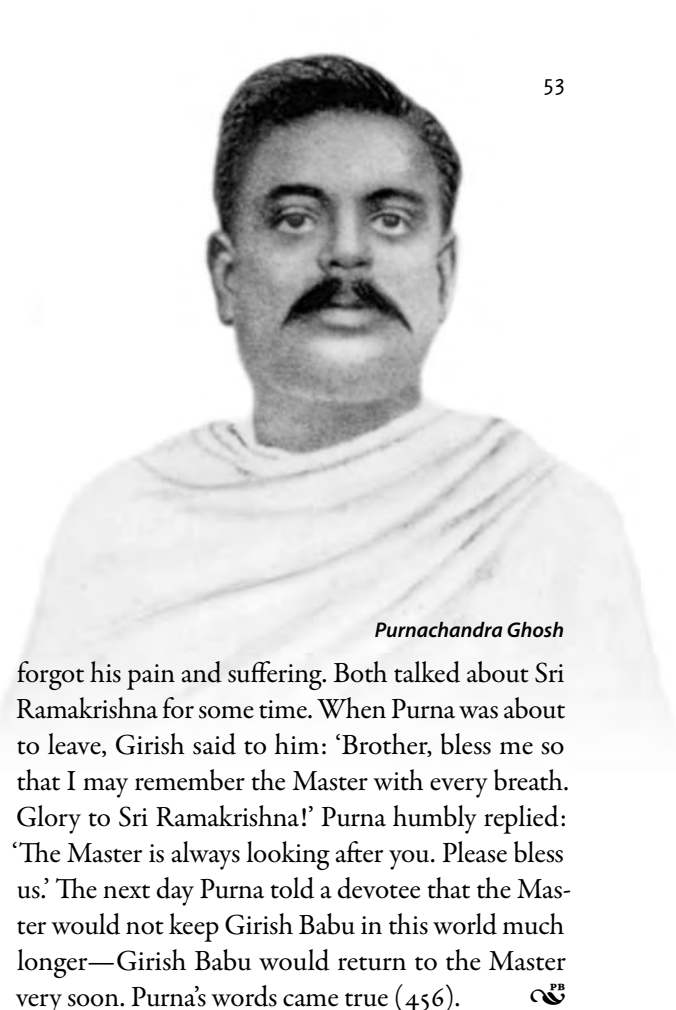
Purnachandra Ghosh

The following conversation with Purnachandra Ghosh was recorded by Kumudbandhu Sen:


One evening I was talking to Purna about Girish's love and devotion for the Master. In the course of the conversation I said, 'Last night Girish mentioned something wonderful.' Purna asked curiously, 'What did he say?' I replied that Girish had said this: 'Who could understand Sri Ramakrishna? Do you think the Master's disciples have understood him? But those who have tasted a drop of his love have realized that the Master's pure divine love was above the world and even beyond any paternal love. God can hide everything except his unbounded love. The disciples and the devotees get intoxicated with a little of that love. Otherwise, who, however great he may be, can comprehend the infinite nature of God?'

As soon as I told him what Girish had said, Purna's face became red and his eyes filled with tears. Grabbing my hand, he took me from his room to the junction of Shyampukur Street and Cornwallis Street [now Bidhan Sarani] and said to me in a choked voice, 'Here—here I experienced that love of the Master.' I had never before seen Purna so emotional. Outwardly he had always been very calm and serious by nature. That night, when I saw his radiant face in the street light, I was speechless. He then said, his voice still choked with emotion, 'It is true, Girish Babu is right. Who can understand the Master? Who can measure his unmotivated, unconditional love? I was a mere boy. What did I know about him? His superhuman love made me convinced that he was God incarnate.'¹⁷

In 1911 Purna visited Girish during his last illness. Seeing Purna, a beloved disciple of the Master, Girish



Purnachandra Ghosh

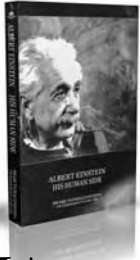
forgot his pain and suffering. Both talked about Sri Ramakrishna for some time. When Purna was about to leave, Girish said to him: 'Brother, bless me so that I may remember the Master with every breath. Glory to Sri Ramakrishna!' Purna humbly replied: 'The Master is always looking after you. Please bless us.' The next day Purna told a devotee that the Master would not keep Girish Babu in this world much longer—Girish Babu would return to the Master very soon. Purna's words came true (456). 

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6. *Gospel*, 973.
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8. *They Lived with God*, 335–6.
9. Mahendranath Datta, *Bhakta Devendranath* (Calcutta: Mahendra Publishing, 1956), 16–17.
10. *They Lived with God*, 237.
11. Vivekananda Swamijir *Jivaner Ghatanavali*, 2.96.
12. Brahmagopal Datta, *Smritichayan* (Calcutta, 1983), 4.
13. Girishchandra Ghosh, *Thakur Sri Ramakrishna O Swami Vivekananda*, ed. Shankari Prasad Basu (Calcutta: Mandal Book House, 1981), 50–2.
14. *They Lived with God*, 106.
15. *Smritikatha: Srīma Sarada, Swami Vivekananda O Ramakrishna Mandali*, 55.
16. Ramchandra Datta, *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsadever Jivan-vrittanta* (Calcutta: Yogodyan, 1950), 141–7.
17. *They Lived with God*, 452.

REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications.



**Albert Einstein:
His Human Side**
Swami Tathagatananda

The Vedanta Society of New York, 34
West 71st Street, New York, NY 10023.
E-mail: vedantasoc@aol.com. 2008.
182 pp. Rs 60.

It is commonly believed that the biography of a scientist should best be written by a fellow scientist. In general this is true. Such biographies, however, focus so much on the scientific achievements that the personality of the scientist as a human being gets completely masked. Albert Einstein's life and utterances offer rich material to highlight the humanitarian aspects of a brilliant physicist. There are a large number of scientific biographies of Einstein. The book under review, written by a monk, refreshingly highlights the human side of his personality.

Swami Tathagatananda has proved beyond doubt that it is possible for a non-scientist to write, with full authenticity, the life story of a great scientist that touches upon his human qualities without referring to his epoch-making discoveries. The author has described Einstein's early life, his family background, his trials and tribulations in a hostile environment, his struggle to get a proper education, and his futile attempts to find a suitable place in a university faculty. It was his remarkable publications of 1905 that changed his life forever. He did not win worldwide recognition immediately; for that he had to wait till 1919. But at least he became a force to be reckoned with in the field of physics.

In 1919 he gained international fame, and consequential loss of privacy, when one of the predictions of his General Theory of Relativity—the influence of gravity on light—was spectacularly proved by Sir Arthur Eddington of Cambridge University. This popularity led to jealousy and then to persecution by the Nazi establishment. Ultimately, he had to leave Germany for good and settle in the United States, at Princeton. His last notable paper, in which he questioned Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, was pub-

lished in 1935.

Einstein then got embroiled in the politics of the Second World War and this led him to write the now famous letter to President Roosevelt. Reluctantly, he had to endorse the Manhattan Project, which resulted in the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This disaster was the crisis that turned his mind to international peace. It does not mean that he stopped pursuing serious scientific research. He was still searching for a unified field theory; but he was no longer considered a force in the scientific world.

Swami Tathagatananda's book brings Einstein to life. As one goes on reading the book, one feels more and more convinced that Einstein was a great *sthita-prajna*, a person with a steadfast intellect. His life was full of conflicts, both private and public, but he triumphed over all of them. It is indeed remarkable how the author has described these with so much warmth and affection.

This is an authoritative biography of Einstein that is likely to be quoted often. Readers will be grateful to the author for this wonderful addition to the literature on this great personality.

Dr N V C Swamy

Dean of Academic Programmes

Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana
Bangaluru



**The Epistemology of
Viśiṣṭādvaita**
Vedavalli Narayanan

Munshiram Manoharlal, Post Box 5715,
54 Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 110 055.
Website: www.mrmlbooks.com. 2008.
xii + 171 pp. Rs 395.

This book is a revised version of Vedavalli Narayanan's doctoral thesis. It is a study based on the *Nyaya-parishuddhi* of Vedanta Deshika which is an excellent introduction to the epistemology of Vishishtadvaita Vedanta.

The present book is divided into six chapters. The first chapter gives a good introduction to the text of *Nyaya-parishuddhi*. As Vedanta Deshika

himself declares, its focus is on the means of knowledge: *pramāṇas*. True to its name, the work aims at 'purification'—adjustment and modification—of the Nyaya system to make it acceptable to the philosophy of qualified monism.

The second chapter deals with knowledge and its scope. Knowledge relates the knowing subject, *pramātā*, to the object of knowledge, *prameya*. When the two are related through a *pramāṇa*, knowledge arises. The chapter deals with knowledge as an attribute. The author observes that knowledge is self-revelatory. When knowledge reveals an object to the jiva, it is termed *arthaprakāśa*. Since during the process of knowing it also manifests itself, knowledge is self-revelatory, *svayamprakāśa*. Vedanta Deshika's treatment of knowledge as self-revelatory as opposed to the Naiyayika view of *parataḥ-prakāśa*, revelation through other agencies, is well brought out by Narayanan. The concepts of *pramā*, valid knowledge, *apramā* or *bhrama*, invalid knowledge, and *saṁśaya*, doubt, are also explained in depth.

The third chapter deals with perception and its classification. Vedanta Deshika classifies perception in two categories: *nitya*, eternal, and *anitya*, non-eternal. The perceptions of God, the eternally free souls, and the liberated ones, *muktas*, are said to be eternal. The perceptions of mortals are non-eternal. The author throws sufficient light on such other aspects of perception as sense organs, mind, the relation between sense organs and objects, and the mode of perception. A detailed explanation of the Viśiṣṭadvaita concept of *nirvikalpaka* or indeterminate perception is given at the end of the chapter.

The fourth chapter gives a detailed exposition of Vedanta Deshika's treatment of *anumāna*, inference. The *Nyaya-parishuddhi* defines *anumāna* as the knowledge of a particular pervader, *vyāpaka viśeṣa*, obtained from the observation, *anusandhāna*, of the pervaded-ness, *vyāpyatva*, of the pervaded entity, *vyāpya*. Narayanan discusses the reasons for classifying *anumāna* as an independent *pramāṇa*. She also elaborates upon the concept of *upādhi*, 'instances that defy the principle of invariable relation'. She writes: 'Upādhi is of two types: the definite (*nīścita*) and the indefinite (*śaṅkita*). When the *upādhi* which is invariably related to *sādhya* [probandum] is definitely absent in the *pakṣa* [subject], it is called definite *upādhi*. ... When there is doubt regarding either the absence of *upādhi* in the *pakṣa* or [the] *upādhi*'s being co-extensive with the *sādhya*, then it is known as indefinite *upādhi*' (74–5).

The fifth chapter deals with *śabda* and its definition. Deshika defines *śabda* as 'the knowledge of the meaning (*artha-vijñānam*) obtained from statements that are not uttered by [the] untrustworthy' (103). Vedavalli explains at length the concept of 'word' and its import, the syntactical relations between a sentence and the words constituting it, and the problem of meaning. The chapter ends with a note on the principal texts of verbal testimony. The last chapter gives a summary of other means of knowledge: memory, comparison, postulation, and non-cognition.

This book would make good reading for researchers undertaking a study of the tenets of Vedānta in general and of Viśiṣṭadvaita in particular.

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An Investigation into the Nature of Consciousness and Form

Richard L Thompson

Motilal Banarsidass, 41 UA Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007.
E-mail: mlbd@vsnl.com. 2007. 254 pp.
Rs 395.

This book is an inquiry into the fascinating subject of the origin and nature of consciousness, and the author's effort to explore the subject using scientific methods is laudable. However, a scientific inquiry presupposes an open mind free from preconceptions. One may cite as an example the author's views on Creation and cosmology. Semitic religions have long held that the world is a deliberate creation of God and cannot be an outcome of chance. But not all Indic religions give the function of creation to God. According to Advaita Vedānta, for instance, God the Creator is as much the product of *māyā* as is the world. Once one takes this stance, one is able to see the loopholes in the author's mathematical analyses.

In a similar vein, one can trace the influence of dualistic schools of Vedānta on the author's work. Thus it suffers the same defects as works of any other dualistic school. The task ahead for the author was then not just to refute scientific theory but also to answer the old objections by monistic and qualified-monistic Vedānta. Of course, non-dualistic Vedānta has its own unsolved mysteries, but there the number of suppositions is possibly less.

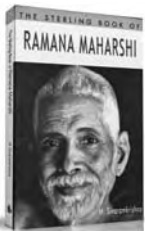
Let us look at the way the author has 'proved' that

the conscious being can only be the creation of God, and not of natural evolution. He affirms that the initial and boundary conditions as well as all the laws of nature can be described in six pages of 'programming instructions'. Suppose we do not agree with this assumption—after all, even a trivial simulation of any sub-system of the physical world takes page after page of programming. If we assert that the aforementioned 'programming instructions' are a hundred pages long, then according to the calculations done by the author the upper bound of probability for the evolution of a conscious being is not as small as it is made out to be. In reality, the specification of initial conditions just after the big bang would require us to assign coordinates to each and every particle in the universe, and this would run into numerous pages. One cannot assume that the universe had a uniform distribution of mass and energy at any point of time—even when it was infinitesimally small.

These considerations aside, the book—with its arguments between Kutark, Shunya, Yantri (the biologist), Baum (the physicist), and Avaroha (the mathematician, representing the views of the author himself)—makes for interesting reading.

Swami Sarvottamananda

Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University
Belur



**The Sterling Book of
Ramana Maharshi**
Prof. M Sivaramkrishna

Sterling Publishers, A-59 Okhla Industrial Area, Phase II, New Delhi 110 020. E-mail: ghai@nde.vsnl.net.in. 2008. 119 pp. Rs 99.

Ramana Maharshi was an extraordinary savant of recent times. Various accounts of his life are available and there is no dearth of books on his teachings. Not just another work on this sage, the present book gives fresh insights into many well-known aspects of his life. Drawing parallels from the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, the author, a prolific writer on philosophy and spirituality, depicts how spiritual awareness percolated into every small activity in the life of these great persons. The author retells many incidents in his own inimitable style and also creates conversations with the Maharshi to bring out some striking aspects of his thought. The book emphasizes that Bhagavan Ramana followed a natural way of self-inquiry. Written in a style at once entertaining and

thought-provoking, this slim volume will prove to be a good primer on Ramana Maharshi's life and will encourage readers to discover more about him.

PB

BOOKS RECEIVED



**Quest for Truth:
Original Letters of
Vimala Thakar**
Nithiya Kalyani

Motilal Banarsidass. 2008. viii + 133 pp.
Rs 150.

This book is a fascinating document recording how Vimala Thakar, one of the most remarkable spiritual personalities of present times, helps an aspirant unfold her spiritual potential through communications that transmit great power cloaked in profound simplicity.



**Krishna: A Study
Based on Mahabharata**
Nagesh D Sonde

318, Raheja Crest 3, Link Road, Andheri (W), Mumbai 400 053. E-mail: nageshsonde@gmail.com. 2008. 319 pp.
Rs 500.

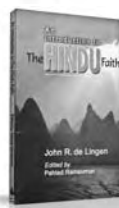
The author shows Krishna as 'the human form in which the divine consciousness has become more luminous', a multifaceted personality that is 'as particular as he is universal, palpable in the present moment and yet perceptible beyond the constraints of Time, as earthly as he is sensual, as temporal as he is spiritual, supreme Person, god and Brahman'.



**Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal:
A Tribute**

Ed. Haripada Mondal

Bangiya Sahitya Parishat, Midnapore
721 101. 2008. viii + 126 pp. Rs 100.



**An Introduction to
the Hindu Faith**

John R de Lingon;
Ed. Prahlad Ramsurrun

Sterling Publishers. 2008. xii + 108 pp.
Rs 125.

REPORTS



News from Branch Centres

Ramakrishna Math, Kochi, organized a one-day value orientation programme for teachers and academicians on 6 June 2009. Besides, on 25 July, the centre started a monthly programme, called 'Swami Vivekananda Learning Series', through which the life and teachings of Swami Vivekananda would be presented and discussed.

On 21 June **Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Memorial, Vadodara**, felicitated about one hundred school students who had achieved brilliant results in class 10 and 12 examinations of the Gujarat Board and CBSE. The programme was held at the C C Mehta auditorium in the presence of a large number of dignitaries, teachers, students, and parents. Sri P N Bhagwati, former Chief Justice, Supreme Court of India, congratulated and addressed the students. Dr Mrunalini Devi Puar, Chancellor, Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, Sri Kantisen Shroff, well-known philanthropist and industrialist, and Sri Kanak Tiwari, well-known speaker and writer of Chhatisgarh, delivered inspiring speeches and also felicitated the students.

Sri P N Bhagwati felicitates a student at Vadodara



New outpatient department at Thiruvananthapuram

The new laboratory block and the new outpatient counter of the hospital at **Ramakrishna Ashrama, Thiruvananthapuram**, were inaugurated on 3 July.

Swami Prabhananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated a mobile medical unit at **Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Muzaffarpur**, on 19 June.

On 29 June **Ramakrishna Mission, Limbdi**, felicitated 25 students of Gujarat for their brilliant performance in class 10 and 12 examinations.

On 19 July Sri Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, Chief Minister, West Bengal, visited the check-dam built at Charra village in Purulia II block by **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Purulia**, in collaboration with the science and technology department of the state government.

Srimat Swami Smarananandaji Maharaj, Vice President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, laid the foundation stone for the proposed new school building at the Vivekananda Vidyapith campus of the **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Bhopal**, on 24 July.

Summer Camps

The following centres conducted summer camps for children with programmes that included chanting, bhajans, moral lessons, meditation, yogasanas, and several other formative activities: **Belgaum**, 26 days (15 April to 10 May), 140 children (age group 10–16); **Chennai Math**, 30 days (1 to 29 May), 350 children (age group 8–14); **Porbandar**, 39 days (1 May to 7 June), 150 students (class 5 to class 7).

Achievements

Eight students, four each from class-10 and class-12, of the school at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narainpur**, have won the Mukhyamantri Jnana Puraskar for their excellent performance in the state board examinations of 2007–08. Each student received a cash award of 10,000 rupees.

Relief

Cyclone Aila Relief • Centres in West Bengal continued relief operations among the victims of Aila Cyclone. Details of the relief materials distributed during July are as follows. **Baranagar Mission**: 1,636 kg rice, 200 kg dal, 36 kg biscuits, 804 l drinking water, and 7 kg milk powder to 477 families in 3 villages of Sandeshkhali I block in North 24-Parganas district. Besides, the centre distributed 155 bales of used garments to thousands of victims at Sandeshkhali I & II and Hingalganj blocks in North 24-Parganas district. **Belgharia**: 6,123 saris, 3,003 lungis, 2,995 mosquito-nets, and 299,500 halogen tablets to 2,995 families in 14 villages of Gosaba block in South 24-Parganas district. **Rahara**: 7,750 kg rice, 1,350 kg dal, 1,400 kg potatoes, 124 kg muri, 101 kg salt, 10 kg biscuits, 1,335 saris, and 1,335 mosquito nets to 1,495 families in 4 villages of Hingalganj block in North 24-Parganas district. Besides, the centre treated 938 patients


and provided 250 kg bleaching powder for disinfecting some areas in Sandeshkhali block in North 24-Parganas district. **Saradapitha**: 10,150 kg rice, 50 kg potatoes, 2,500 mosquito nets, and 20 bales of used garments to 3,559 families in 12 villages of Sandeshkhali I & II blocks in North 24-Parganas district. **Swamiji's Ancestral House**: 2,885 kg chira, 146 kg gur, 279 kg sugar, 206 kg rice, 60 kg potatoes, 40 kg biscuits, 14 kg muri, 300 l drinking water, and other items to 560 families in 7 villages of Sandeshkhali I block in North 24-Parganas district.

Fire Relief • **Vishakhapatnam** centre distributed 14 kg chira, 29 kg gur, 29 kg potatoes, 29 kg onion, 29 kg oil, 29 kg salt, 14 kg tamarind, 14 kg spices, 174 candles, 29 matchboxes, 87 packets of biscuits, 29 towels, 29 chadars, 29 dhotis, 29 saris, and other items to 29 families whose houses had been gutted by fire at Pekeru village in Vishakhapatnam district.

Flood Relief • **Porbandar** centre distributed 11,740 food packets to flood victims in and around Porbandar.

Distress Relief • The following centres distributed various items to needy people in their respective areas. **Belgaum**: 375 kg rice, 375 kg flour, 75 kg dal, 75 kg edible oil, 1,500 notebooks, and 250 pens; **Kalady**: 400 blankets; **Kanchipuram**: 7,500 notebooks, 1,400 pencils, 1,400 erasers, 150 geometry boxes, 200 dictionaries, and 25 school uniforms; **Nattarampalli**: 1,022 sets of school uniform cloth, notebooks, pens, pencils, erasers, and scales; **Porbandar**: textbooks and notebooks to 684 students.

Refugee Relief • **Colombo** centre in Sri Lanka continued relief operations among victims of the recent civil war by distributing 12,250 kg nutritious supplementary food, 2,450 kg biscuits, 2,450 kg glucose, 2,450 kg milk powder, 2,450 tubes of toothpaste, 2,450 toothbrushes, 2,450 pieces washing soap, 2,450 pieces disinfectant soap, 2,450 strips of paracetamol, and many other items to 1,225 refugees at Pulmoddai Camp, Trincomalee.

Pilgrimage Service • **Puri Mission** served lemonade and drinking water to about 23,000 pilgrims during the Ratha Yatra festival and treated 152 patients in the medical camp organized for this occasion. The centre also served lemon water to about 900 passers-by every day during the summer. 

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